



A Look Back at The 4-H Know Your Government Conference



Edited by Know Your Government Chief News Editor: **Miles Palmer**

"Welcome to Know Your Government!"

That was the first thing delegates from all four districts heard upon arriving in Boise, Idaho. Many were tired from the long journey but eager to learn about our legislative and judicial systems.

Know Your Government (KYG) is an event designed for teens to gain firsthand experience with Idaho's government. This year's theme—**Learn, Prepare, Live**—guided our activities and discussions.

We began our journey at the Basque Center, where we explored the rich culture and traditions that continue to thrive in Idaho. By understanding the past, we can better prepare for the future.

In preparation for our future, we delved into the judicial system and legislative process by participating in a mock trial and legislative session. Delegates worked on six bills, covering topics ranging from the driving age to falsifying service animals. They learned how a bill is introduced, debated, and passed—or what happens if it fails. Meanwhile, judicial delegates studied and rehearsed the trial process. Taking on roles in the case: State of Idaho v. Jesse King, gaining hands-on experience in how the legal system operates.

Most importantly, we **lived** in the present—connecting with friends, engaging in intense debates in the courtroom, and collaborating in committee sessions. KYG offers more than just knowledge; it fosters meaningful connections and a deeper understanding of our government in action.



Know Your Government

February 13-15
2025

Northern District
48 Youth
8 Adults

Eastern District
34 Youth
5 Adults

Southern District
42 Youth
7 Adults

Central District
35 Youth
10 Adults



Over 160 delegates and 30 volunteer staff attended this year—48 from Northern District, 34 from Eastern District, 42 from Southern District, and 35 from Central District. See for yourself!



Honoring 25 Years of Attending the Know Your Government Conference

Jamie Hill is at her 25th Know Your Government (KYG) conference, and has been volunteering as a legislative track steering committee coordinator for 22 years. She attended to the University of Idaho for her undergraduate degree, and Oregon for graduate school. She then moved back to Moscow, where she has been volunteering for the American Red Cross and has served for seven years on the Moscow Farmers Market Commission, which is ranked number one in the Northwest. She is also an advisor for her sorority, and has volunteered for the National Old-time Fiddle Contest.

Her devotion for KYG started out as a delegate. She fell in love with the legislative track and served as a legislator for her steering committee year. After her delegate years were over, she decided to help her mother with the steering committee even though she was too young to be a coordinator.

Little did she know that she would be volunteering for 22 years leading the legislative track. Jamie is the third generation of KYG committee members following after her grandmother, who volunteered for the first few conferences and her mother who served alongside her for ten years from 2004 to 2014.



Young Jamie Hill sitting next to Rep. Lawrence Denney at KYG in the early 2000s.

Written by: Miles Palmer

Bill 111: Raising the Age For Driver permitting and Licensing

The issue of driving among teenagers is a topic that inevitably arises as young people reach the appropriate age. As a teenager, I understand the eagerness to obtain a driver's license. However, parents often hold varying perspectives on the appropriate age for driving and the conditions under which teenagers should be allowed to drive. This includes when they can begin driver's education, the number of passengers they can transport, and the regulations surrounding nighttime driving. This bill proposes to raise the minimum age for nighttime driving from 16 to 17, as well as to increase the age at which teenagers are eligible to begin driver's education to 15 and a half.



The justification for raising the age for driving is largely based on statistical data. According to Safety Insurance, 43% of all first-year teen drivers are involved in accidents, and car crashes remain the leading cause of death among individuals aged 16-24, accounting for 48.5% of all fatalities within that demographic. These statistics are alarmingly high, but this bill may help mitigate these risks by ensuring that more experienced and older drivers are present on the road. However, there are those who argue that age alone is not the determining factor in driving competence.

It is true that maturity varies greatly among individuals; a 15-year-old may possess the maturity of a 12-year-old. Therefore, raising the legal driving age may not necessarily resolve the underlying issue of teen accidents. Other potential solutions could include increasing the difficulty of Idaho's driving test. Idaho's driving test is considered to be of average difficulty, suggesting that there may be room for improvement. While being average is not inherently problematic, this bill could pose significant challenges for rural communities in Idaho

Many rural parents rely on their teenage children to assist with farm work or drive younger siblings to school, starting as early as age 14. Raising the age for obtaining a license to 15 and a half could significantly impact these families, particularly those who are already struggling with transportation challenges. While this bill may offer some benefits, it is crucial to carefully consider the potential consequences and assess whether the intended benefits outweigh the costs.

During the committee review, several amendments were proposed, and many valuable learning moments with Senator Dygert were had. The bill, as amended, passed and will move forward with the following changes: teens will be allowed to start driver's education at age 14, and the required driving time will increase to one year with a permit. Section two, regarding the age for obtaining a license, remains unchanged, while the proposal to raise the minimum age for nighttime driving was removed.

Written by: Jonah Knapp



Bill 222: The Use of Snow Days in Idaho Public Schools

In the winter months of 2017, Idaho was facing some of the heaviest snowfall that it had seen in over 30 years. The Idaho Office of Emergency Management and many local Idahoans had nicknamed these early months the “Snowmageddon.” With snow drifts taller than your average third grader, and roads icier than an Olympic size ice skating rink many locals thought that schools would shut down; however, this was not the case. Students continued to trek to school through the harsh January blizzards and February floods that followed as schools had not allotted the correct amount of days that the school could be closed due to “harsh winter conditions.” Contrast this to 2025, where Idaho and a majority of the Western United States is now facing a new version of winter that globally has been nicknamed the “Snow Drought.” This has caused many questions to arise from both faculty and students as to where these “extra” days schools have set aside for snow days will go when the winter months pass and they haven’t been used.

House Bill 222 introduces a solution to these questions that will benefit not only the students and faculty, but the districts as a whole. This bill proposes that in the case of unused snow days, schools will be required to deduct the allotted amount from the end of the school year to ensure students don’t have to attend more than the required hours of education. Additionally, it also states that in the case of an emergency where extra snow days are used; schools will be required to adjust their calendar year to make sure that minimum hours will still be met. This could include extending the school year to end later or extend the number of hours that students will attend each day.

When talking with 3rd year Representative Arabella Kohtz of Twin Falls County, I got to hear more about her interest in this bill and the impact she wants it to leave. She stated that she was tired of hearing complaints around school and wanted to take action in hopes to spark interest in her community. “This may be a mock bill that teens are debating on, but I hope someday a bill like this will reach the legislature because this is a relevant problem that is changing the lives of all those involved in education.” Miss Kohtz stated this during one of our interviews and it is something important for everyone reading to remember. By taking action and standing up for problems she was seeing in schools, Miss Kohtz was able to write this bill for our delegates to debate and vote on during the conference.

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Rep. Kohtz feels her bill will pass because our delegates are at the age where they are starting to understand the impact that school cancellations can cause on their education. A prime example of school cancellation that impacted youth is the COVID-19 School Closures. During this time, students switched to remote learning from home which came with a number of challenges including lack of home resources for students to learn on, wifi and internet crashes, and lack of socialization. While it may not impact students on the same level the global pandemic did, extended snow closures can present many of the same problems. Wi-Fi and internet can go down due to snow and ice piled on the power lines and satellite dishes; preventing schools from having digital school days during icy times. As mentioned earlier, House Bill 222 is presenting schools with solutions that will prevent the worry of lost work time due to icy weather.



Cicily Hunt was a Lobbyist for the opposing side of this bill and she presented many great arguments to the Education Committee with a main focus on the importance of keeping those extra hours from snow days to ensure students will get a proper education. HB 222's Lobbyist for the affirmative side, Josephine Kohtz presented the committee with evidence that countered Lobbyist Hunt. This evidence included that school board's take the time to ensure their minimum hours of education will present students with all the materials they need to learn for that school year.

House Bill 222 passed in the Education Committee with a vote of seven to three with three amendments to the bill. Arguments in favor of HB 222 were that it can take off academic pressure, reducing accidents that relate to icy conditions, and it gives teachers the opportunity to catch up on grading and update agendas and lesson plans. Opposing arguments for HB 222 include that by taking away days at the end of the calendar year; we may be taking away breakfasts and lunches that less fortunate students need, teachers' lesson plans will be disrupted, and that every moment that students spend in education is vital, so we need those extra hours that the snow days have to offer. After much debate with strong arguments on both sides, the bill was moved to the House with a due pass.

Written by: Josie Albritton



A Note From the Judicial Track

Justice isn't blind; it's searching. Searching for the truth amidst a sea of conflicting evidence and human emotion. The courts, whether it's wills, birth certificates, crime, or jury duty, affect everyone in some way, with each person's life intertwined with the judicial system. This makes understanding the judicial system in Idaho all the more crucial—how can we make an impact if we do not understand it? At the Know Your Government (KYG) conference held in Boise, we do just that. We learn about the judicial system, its structure, and its significance in Idaho by running a mock homicide case and working with real-life legal officials.



The KYG court case this year is *State of Idaho vs. Jesse King*. In this trial, KYG delegates play the role of witnesses to show every perspective. This helps the delegate attorneys make their case. The witnesses, victims, and even the police in this mock trial each have their own biases, limited points of view, and potential connections to other witnesses or even the victim and defendant. The witness testimonies and the cross-examinations reveal the truth and disprove the blindness of injustice. Mock attorneys and prosecutors question witnesses and make connections to uncover inaccuracies, proving innocence or determining guilt. The judge, along with steering committee members, determines the ruling of the case: guilty or not guilty. Mahala Hall played the role of prosecutor in the case of *State of Idaho vs. Jesse King*. Will the truth be revealed, or will it remain hidden? This, we do not know. It is the prosecutor's job to prove guilt. By poking holes in the case and raising reasonable doubt about whether the accused committed the crime, the case could be ruled not guilty. Not just our youth participate; we have legal professionals working by our side to solidify our cases and deepen our understanding of the law.

Our legal professionals, working with us to understand the justice system, have some thoughts on how Know Your Government is benefiting today's youth. Hannah Harrington, a second-year law student at the University of Idaho, is assisting us with our cases. Ms. Harrington mentioned that "youth in this program, from what she's seen, are going to have a great foundation for understanding government." This program allows youth to start getting involved with civics. As Boston Cox, a witness for our case, states, "Civic education in general is important, and KYG gives teens the opportunity to learn." Even legal officials, such as Justice Lorello, recommend that youth learn about our legal system and government because "children are the future"—not just our next generation, but our next generation of government officials and leaders.

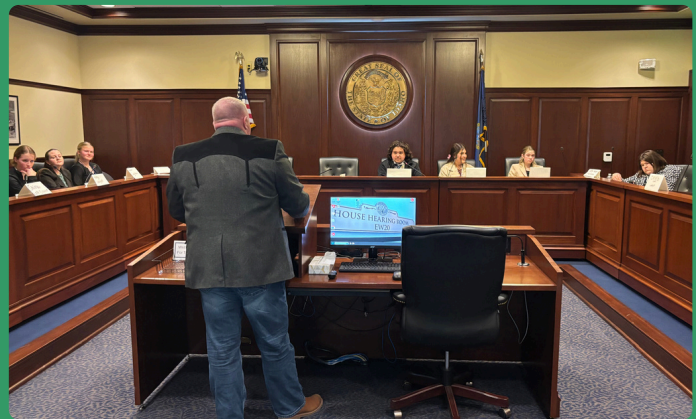
As shown, Know Your Government can be a pivotal event for youth to be introduced to government, especially the justice system. Those in government encourage youth to learn about the legal system. KYG is open to grades 8-10 and is a great opportunity to open new horizons. To learn more, visit <https://www.uidaho.edu/extension/4h/events/know-your-government>.

Written by: Cynthia Squires

Bill 333: Raising the Minimum wage in Idaho

Here's a revised version with minor changes to improve flow and readability: Bill Number 333 addresses the raising of the minimum wage in Idaho. Section one of the bill proposes that the minimum wage will increase to \$11.03 per hour for adults and \$8.93 per hour for minors, with the change set to take effect on January 1, 2026. Section two specifies that minimum wage rates will rise by 1.5% annually, beginning on January 1, 2032. This bill aims to improve the standard of living for Idahoans. Minimum wage is the lowest hourly rate an employer can legally pay a worker.

One common question surrounding this bill is: how does an increase in the minimum wage affect living costs? Raising the minimum wage is a topic that sparks debate over its potential impact on workers and the economy. Increases in the minimum wage could raise the earnings and family income of many low-wage workers, helping lift some families out of poverty. A higher minimum wage would improve the standard of living for these workers by providing enough income to keep pace with the rising cost of living.



Some may argue that raising the minimum wage can increase the cost of living, but even a modest wage increase can help lower prices in certain areas. Additionally, small increases in the minimum wage may even lead to greater employment opportunities in low-wage labor markets. Raising the minimum wage could stimulate consumer spending, which in turn helps businesses and boosts the economy. A moderate increase would enhance worker productivity and stimulate overall economic growth by generating more consumer demand. Raising the minimum wage to \$11.03 for adults and \$8.93 for minors would benefit all low-wage workers. Interestingly, did you know that waitstaff are often the only employees who earn minimum wage? Federal law mandates that tipped workers receive a specific hourly wage, as long as their tips bring their earnings up to the federal minimum wage.

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What would happen if the minimum wage were raised? A potential advantage would be a significant boost to economic growth. A higher minimum wage would put more money in the hands of millions of workers, which would then flow into retailers and other businesses, further stimulating the economy.

Raising the minimum wage often sparks strong opinions from various perspectives. While it could lift millions out of poverty, improve the quality of life for low-income workers, and boost the economy through increased consumer demand, concerns about job losses and higher business costs are also valid. The decision to raise the minimum wage should take into account current economic conditions and the needs of the workforce. A gradual increase, as outlined in this bill, could address potential drawbacks while achieving the goal of improving Idahoans' livelihoods.

Ultimately, this legislation seeks to address critical issues, like economic stability, and provide effective solutions. The goal of raising the minimum wage is to ensure that Idaho's residents can enjoy a more comfortable and secure life.

Written by: Lilyana Perez



Bill 444: Canine Cruelty

Whether it's a black lab or a golden retriever, each pet owner holds a special spot in their heart for their furry friends. In many ways, pets take care of their owners just as much as their owners care for them—offering companionship while curled up beside the TV, going on a walk for fresh air and exercise, or tagging along on a drive to run errands. However, leaving a dog in the car, even with seemingly mild temperatures, can be more dangerous than one would realize. Leaving a canine in a vehicle with temperatures of 65 degrees Fahrenheit or higher threatens a pet's safety.

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, a vehicle can quickly reach dangerous temperatures that pose a threat to a dog's well-being, and cracking a window doesn't help. Research on vehicle safety indicates that temperatures in your vehicle can rise 20 degrees Fahrenheit in 10 minutes. In one hour, your vehicle's temperature can soar by as much as 40 degrees Fahrenheit, creating a life-threatening environment for a pet.

To address this risk, House Bill 444 makes it illegal to leave a canine in a vehicle with outside temperatures of 65 degrees or higher. Violators of the law will face charges of animal cruelty, be required to surrender their pet, and face fines or even jail time. By enforcing Bill 444, authorities aim to raise awareness about animal cruelty and prevent further harm or even death to pets.



In committee, two key amendments were made to the bill. Owners who leave a dog in the vehicle for more than 15 minutes would be charged with animal cruelty. Additionally, even if the vehicle has air conditioning, water, and food, the dog cannot be left unattended for more than two hours. If an adult is convicted of animal cruelty, the dog is required to be surrendered, and a third offense will result in a \$1,000 fine. These changes were passed unanimously by the committee.

Written by: Katherine Kinder

A Tribute to The Basque Block

The Basque community is one of the oldest European cultures, dating back nearly 200,000 years ago, in northern Spain and southwestern France. The Basque culture is home to many unique traditions, including their language, Euskara. They celebrate with spirited festivals, traditional dances, and a very distinctive Basque menu. These meals often include seafood, lamb, and the infamous Basque bread. Over the years, the community has cherished their heritage and found ways to share their traditions with the world.

In Boise, Idaho, the Basque community has put together a cultural square known as the Basque Block. This area is located in downtown Boise and is home to museums, cultural centers, restaurants, and shops that represent Basque heritage. The Basque Museum and Cultural Center provides educational opportunities to learn about Basque history, migration, and their contributions to Idaho. In addition to the museum, there are nearby specialty shops that offer visitors a taste of Basque culture. The block hosts events such as the Jaialdi festival, which attracts thousands of people every five years to experience Basque traditions.



The Basque Block in Boise represents the Basque community's integration into American society. Early Basque immigrants came to Idaho in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, where they worked as sheepherders. Over time, they created a close-knit community that preserved their customs and traditions while still supporting development. Today, the Basque Block symbolizes the blend of old and new in modern American life. This opportunity offers both locals and visitors a chance to connect with a unique culture that continues to thrive in Idaho.



The 2025 Know Your Government Conference is exploring the heritage of the Basque community. Delegates attended a cultural presentation and dinner at Boise's Basque Block, gaining valuable insights into Basque traditions and the historic culture that has thrived for many centuries.

Written by: Katherine Kinder

Bill 555: Prohibiting False Service Dog Claims

Upon entering various establishments, it's common to see a sign stating something along the lines of, "Service animals only. No pets." Most people have likely encountered such a sign and may have wondered, "What would happen if I tried to bring my pet in anyway?" If passed, KYG Bill 555 would provide more clarity regarding this question.

KYG Bill 555 is a straightforward proposal aimed at preventing people from falsely claiming their animals are service dogs. Specifically, it states that, "Any dog owner who falsely claims that their animal is a service animal shall be guilty of a 'false claim of disability.'" The bill's purpose is explicitly to "protect the rights of ADA Service Animals" and outlines punishments for those who violate this provision. But what qualifies as a service dog under the law?

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), "Service animals are defined as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities." While service dogs must be trained to perform tasks for a person with a disability, they do not need to be certified or registered. Although miniature horses can also serve as service animals, KYG Bill 555 focuses exclusively on dogs. It's important to note that emotional support animals are not recognized as service animals.



A similar law to KYG Bill 555 is already active in Idaho, but there are key differences. Under Idaho Code, Title 18 Chapter 58, Section 18-5811A, "Any person who is not an individual with a disability or trained to assist individuals with disabilities, and who uses an assistance device, animal, or service dog in an attempt to gain treatment or benefits as a person with a disability, is guilty of a misdemeanor." KYG Bill 555 would expand on this by making false service dog claims a violation regardless of whether the person attempts to gain benefits or treatment as a disabled individual.

KYG Bill 555 also proposes a different set of penalties than the basic punishment for a misdemeanor. According to Idaho Code, Title 18 Chapter 1, Section 18-113, the penalty for a misdemeanor is up to six months in jail and/or a fine of up to \$1,000. For someone convicted of making a false claim of disability, as outlined in KYG Bill 555, the punishment would also include the temporary seizure of the false service animal. In addition, the person could be required to perform community service, if ordered by the judge. However, jail time would not be part of the punishment under this bill.



In an interview, the bill’s sponsor, Committee Chairman Willow Despain, explained her reasons for proposing Bill 555: “I have friends with service dogs, and they struggle with people falsely claiming their dogs are service dogs, especially at school.” She added, “[People who make these false claims] think that since disabled individuals can bring their service dogs into public places, they should be able to bring in their personal pets as well.” Opinions on the bill were divided. Representative Kenny Wilson, a supporter of the bill, shared his thoughts: “We need to tighten laws around service animals,” he said. “It’s disrespectful to people who have adapted to living with a disability when someone brings a false service dog into public, and it wastes the time of those with legitimate service animals.”

After careful consideration, the State Affairs Committee ultimately did not pass Bill 555. Supporters of the bill argued that false service dogs can disrupt the environment of an establishment and disturb legitimate service animals. However, concerns were raised about the bill’s lack of specific details and clarity. In the end, the committee voted unanimously to send the bill back to the sponsor for amendments.

Written by: Jared Cramer



Bill 777: Regulation of Social Media for Minors

This bill regulates the use of social media by minors.

Section One states: "Minors may not use any social media platform without consent from a parent or guardian. Additionally, they cannot use social media for more than a cumulative total of four (4) hours a day or between 10:00 PM (22:00) and 7:00 AM (07:00)." A recent study conducted by BYU found that teenage girls who spent two to three hours daily on social media at age 13 had a higher risk of suicide as young adults.

Section Two specifies: "Social media may not be used on the grounds of Idaho public schools or in government buildings."

Section Three outlines the consequences: "If a minor is found in violation of these restrictions, they will face a ban from all social media for up to twenty (20) weeks. This ban may increase with repeated violations, potentially leading to a one-year ban and up to three days in juvenile detention."



The American Psychological Association describes social media as “forms of digital communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content.” While social media can have positive effects—such as fostering social connections, promoting learning and growth, and facilitating self-expression and identity formation—it also raises several concerns. Issues like cyberbullying, disrupted sleep patterns, disinformation, misinformation, and diminished self-worth can arise from social media use. It is essential for teens to have in-person interactions rather than relying solely on friendships established online, as this can significantly improve their mental health. Additionally, the Freedom Forum emphasizes that there are occasions when access to social media is necessary, such as during natural disasters or emergencies, as it may be the only means to obtain information or request help.

Social media can have both positive and negative effects on teens. On the positive side, platforms like Twitter and Instagram allow them to stay informed about current events, learn new things, and express their creativity. However, there are negative aspects as well. Brief articles can lead to misunderstandings, and the emphasis on receiving "likes" can make in-person conversations seem less significant. Furthermore, technology is designed to be addictive, which can draw teens into screens and away from real-life interactions.



Therefore, the main objective of the proposed legislation is to reduce the time teens spend on social media, encouraging them to adopt healthier habits and foster more authentic connections with others. Platforms like Twitter and Instagram provide a wealth of information, allowing teens to stay informed about current events, social issues, and trends. Additionally, these platforms offer opportunities for creativity, enabling young users to express their thoughts, share their art or talents, and connect with like-minded individuals across the globe. Such connections can foster a sense of community and belonging, which is especially important during the formative years of adolescence.

However, the negative aspects of social media are equally significant and warrant serious consideration. The frequency of short articles can lead to misunderstandings or oversimplifications of complex issues, preventing teens from developing critical thinking skills. Moreover, the pursuit of "likes" and validation through social media can create a culture of comparison, where teens may feel pressured to present a curated version of their lives. This can make face-to-face interactions feel less meaningful, as they may prioritize online interactions over real-world relationships.

Another concerning factor is the addictive nature of technology. Many social media platforms are designed to capture attention and encourage prolonged usage, which can lead to decreased physical activity and less engagement in real-life experiences. As teens spend more time interacting with screens, they may become isolated, missing out on vital in-person social skills and connections.

Given these mixed influences, the main goal of the proposed legislation is to mitigate the negative effects of social media on young people. By cutting down the time teens spend on these platforms, this legislation aims to encourage healthier habits, such as participating in sports, arts, and other extracurricular activities. Furthermore, it seeks to inspire teens to cultivate more genuine connections with family and friends, ultimately promoting their emotional well-being and social development. Addressing the impact of social media is essential for guiding young people toward a balanced and fulfilling life.

After much discussion on House Bill 777, considering many of the points above, this bill—concerning social media for teens—was reviewed at the Know Your Government conference.

Written by: Brooklyn Powell





About The Editor



*Miles Palmer (bottom)
carrying Ean Gauthier
(top)*

I, **Miles Palmer**, am the fourth-year Steering Committee News Editor for the 2025 KYG conference. I still remember being a little eighth-grader in oversized clothes, not knowing anyone, with my only 4-H experience being a chicken project. Like many others, I felt slightly intimidated by the older steering committee members, but I was also drawn to the 4-H leadership opportunities available. I was especially inspired by people from my district—like Caleb Hampton, who was the State Teen Association President at the time—to apply for the KYG Steering Committee. From there, I pursued the role of News Editor, and that’s where I am today. My hope is to inspire others just as Caleb once inspired me.

Scan to see your KYG photos here!

