



**IDAHO LAW ENFORCEMENT, FIREFIGHTING AND EMS
MEDAL OF HONOR COMMISSION**

Office of the Idaho Attorney General
Statehouse, Room C210
700 West Jefferson Street
Boise, Idaho

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, February 10, 2026
10:00 a.m.

Item 1 – Call to Order. Chairman Raúl R. Labrador called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

The following Commissioners were present:

Raúl R. Labrador, Attorney General, Office of the Idaho Attorney General
Jason Davis, Sheriff, LCSO, Idaho Sheriffs Association
Wayne Denny, Chief, Idaho Military Division
Carson Tester, Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor
Kirk Carpenter, Chief, Nampa FD, Idaho Fire Chiefs Association
Tim Miller, Executive Director, Idaho Peace Officers Association
Brad Johnson, Division Administrator, Peace Officer Standards & Training
Via remotely:
Jeremy Engbaum, Chief, Buhl PD, Idaho Chiefs of Police Association

Others present:

Lieutenant Zachary Bartschi, Pocatello Police Department
Interim Fire Chief Paul Radford, Idaho Falls Fire Department (via Teams)
Sheriff Kevin Copperi and Lieutenant Lacroix, Valley County Sheriff's Office
Lieutenant Childers and Captain Daniels, Nampa Police Department
Fire Chief Kevin Croffoot, Northern Lakes Fire District
Division Chief of EMS Luke Micheal, Northern Lakes Fire District
Union President Jarrod Pitts, Northern Lakes Fire District
Fire Chief Tom Grief, Coeur d'Alene Fire Department
Union President Gabe Eckert, Coeur d'Alene Firefighters
Deputy Chief Bill Derupter, Idaho Fire Chiefs Association
Fire Chief Pete Holley, Kootenai County Fire & Rescue
Division Chief Kevin Lawler, Kootenai County Fire & Rescue
Battalion Chief Kaipo Kuehu, Kootenai County Fire & Rescue
Sheriff Robert Norris, Kootenai County Sheriff's Office (via Teams)
Undersheriff Brett Nelson, Kootenai County Sheriff's Office (via Teams)
Captain Kevin Smart, Kootenai County Sheriff's Office (via Teams)
BryonAnn Green, Commission Secretary (OAG)

Kimi White, Executive Assistant (OAG)
Damon Sidur, Director of Communications (OAG)
Phil Broadbent, Associate Attorney General (OAG)
Chris Burkhead, IT Operations (OAG)

Discussion:

Chairman Labrador proposed to the Commissioners to set another meeting date for deliberations and selection of recipients due to the large number of applicants this year. Chairman also proposed to do it this way for all future meetings. No objections were made by the Commissioners.

Item 2 – Prior Meeting Minutes. Chairman Labrador asked if there were any changes to the proposed August 12, 2025, minutes. None presented. Comm’r. Kirk Carpenter moved to approve. Comm’r. Brad Johnson seconded the motion. Chairman Labrador called for the vote. The motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment: There were no public comments.

Item 3 – Review of Medal of Honor Qualifications. Chairman Labrador read the Medal of Honor Qualifications to the Commissioners. Chairman Labrador opened for discussion. The statute was discussed by the Chair and Commissioners. No further questions.

Item 4 – Presentation and Discussion re: 2026 Nominations: The Commissioners were provided with copies of the nomination applications via email sent to them by Commission Secretary BryonAnn.

Item 4A. – Lieutenant Bartschi introduced himself and gave a presentation on the nomination of **Corporal and K-9 Handler Francisco Torres**, nominated by the Pocatello Police Department.

On July 21, 2025, at approximately 12:39 a.m., Officer Torres was dispatched to a 911 call, where a smoke detector could be heard. Upon arrival, smoke could be seen coming from the home. Finding the front door locked, he went around to the back. There was a male on the second story saying his wife and their dog were inside. Officer Torres forced entry through a back-glass door and started calling out to see if he could hear or see anyone in the home. EMS had arrived but needed to put on their medical emergency equipment before entering. Officer Torres could see a body in the home of a woman who had collapsed due to smoke inhalation. He was able to pick her up and take the 81-year-old female out the home. Officer Torres suffered smoke inhalation during the rescue but continued assisting first responders until the victim was safely transported for medical care.

Chairman Labrador opened for discussion. Chairman Labrador asked Lt. Bartschi how this nomination exemplifies exceptional meritorious conduct as opposed to the duty that

is an everyday occurrence. Lt. Bartschi answered when police officers usually respond to fires, they make sure the firefighter can go up, have their equipment, and the streets are blocked off. When the firefighters arrived, instead of backing off, Officer Torres continued to search for someone he thought was in the home and found her without delay. If Officer Torres had not done that, Lt. Bartschi was certain that she would have succumbed to her injuries. Time was of the essence, and he did not give up and stepped in where he could. There is little cross training between a police officer and firefighters. Comm'r. Denny asked what the expectation of law enforcement is at the scene of a fire and draw the distinction between what regular law enforcement would do verses what Officer Torres did. Lt. Bartschi answered that they would set up unified commands and set up a perimeter role rather than actually going inside home.

No further discussion, the Chair tabled Item 4A for deliberation at the next meeting set for February 18, 2026.

Item 4B. – Lieutenant Bartschi re-introduced himself and gave a presentation on the nomination of **Patrol Sergeant Justin Buck**, nominated by the Pocatello Police Department.

On May 9, 2025, a call for service was dispatched regarding a male subject threatening to jump off the Benton Street overpass. The overpass is about 40 feet up. At approximately 17:32 hours, Sergeant Buck arrived on scene and observed a male individual standing on the opposite side of the security fence, positioned on a ledge and contemplating jumping. Sgt. Buck wrapped a tether line around his chest and went around the fence to the suspect. Sgt. Buck was able to touch the victim and communicate with him.

Lt. Bartschi then explained to the Commission how Sgt. Buck's actions exemplified exceptional meritorious conduct. He stated that he had been a hostage negotiator for several years and no one would have asked this officer to go on the other side of the fence and do what he did. He would have been expected to secure the area. Sgt. Buck risked his own life and showed that he cared about the man; his actions convinced him not to jump and that saved his life.

Chairman Labrador opened for discussion. Comm'r. Miller asked if he secured with a "bear hug." Lt. Bartschi answered they did a piece method. Chairman Labrador asked how this response was different than any other. Lt. Bartschi answered that normally the officer would shut down the bridge and rail yard, so no trains were going, create a perimeter and continue to negotiate through the fence. Sgt. Buck was not a trained negotiator. Lt. Bartschi believed having that physical contact with the man saved his life.

No further discussion, the Chair tabled Item 4B for deliberation at the next meeting set for February 18, 2026.

Item 4C. and Item 4D. – Interim Fire Chief Paul Radford, attending remotely, introduced himself and presented the nominations of **Senior Firefighter Travis Adams and Senior Firefighter Jeremy F. Newman**, nominated by the Idaho Falls Fire Department.

Chairman Labrador clarified that Senior Firefighter Travis Adams and Senior Firefighter Jeremy F. Newman had participated in the same incident. As such, Chairman Labrador proposed discussing both nominations together. No objections were made.

On October 5, 2025, Senior Firefighter Travis Adams and Senior Firefighter Jeremy F. Newman, while off duty, responded to the scene of a two-vehicle collision on a rural roadway in Bingham County in which a vehicle had left the roadway and became partially submerged in a canal with four occupants trapped inside. They were the first to arrive on scene and made the decision to enter the frigid water and try to remove the occupants. The water was freezing and swift. Neither firefighter was trained for swift water technicians. They entered the water without protection and began removing the occupants. ALS ambulances arrived on scene and transported them to the local hospital. Unfortunately, two victims did not survive but their actions definitely made a difference in the survivability of the other two occupants in the car.

Chairman Labrador opened for discussion. Comm'r. Johnson asked if the car was upside down. Chief Radford responded that it was. Chairman Labrador asked how do you think this is exceptional compared to the regular duties of an officer. Chief Radford answered if they were on duty they would have been properly equipped in some cold-water gear to be in water. They more than likely would not have been the ones to go in the water. The swift water technicians have advanced training to be in those conditions. Senior Firefighter Travis Adams and Senior Firefighter Jeremy F. Newman put their lives at risk to enter the water and try to make a difference. Comm'r. Denney asked if there was an expectation for them to respond since they were off duty. Chief Radford stated there is no official expectation. Comm'r. Carpenter asked what the response time for that unit to get the swift water team in that area. Chief Radford answered 15-20 minutes. Comm'r Tester asked what the function of the pulse point application is. Chief Radford answered that it is a mobile app. your department can subscribe to, which provides more detailed information about the live dispatch calls. Firefighters Adams and Newman recognized the severity of the call and responded. Comm'r Carpenter asked how did the deceased parish. Chief Radford answered from drowning.

No further discussion, the Chair tabled Items 4C and 4D for deliberation at the next meeting set for February 18, 2026.

Item 4E. and Item 4F. – Interim Fire Chief Paul Radford, present via remotely, re-introduced himself and presented the nominations of **Firefighter and Medic Dan Muhlestein and Firefighter and EMT John Sanders**, nominated by the Idaho Falls Fire Department.

Chairman Labrador clarified that Firefighter and Medic Dan Muhlestein and Firefighter and EMT John Sanders had participated in the same incident. As such, Chairman Labrador proposed discussing both nominations together. No objections were made.

On January 13, 2025, Firefighter Medic Dan Muhlestein and Firefighter EMT John Sanders responded to a reported gunshot wound resulting from a domestic altercation in the Swan Valley area. Upon arrival at the scene, they called for law enforcement. Law enforcement was 30 minutes out. A helicopter was not available due to poor weather conditions. Firefighters made the decision to enter the home. They found a gentleman who had been shot on the upper left of his chest. He was deteriorating rapidly; they secured him in the ambulance and started transport to the hospital and was met halfway by engine crew to continue patient care. Chief Radford believed their decision to enter the home and start care as soon as possible resulted in saving his life.

Chairman Labrador opened for discussion. Comm'r. Miller asked if the suspect was still on sight. Chief Radford answered yes, he was shot by his wife. The scene was not secure. They did not have any body armor or weapons. Comm'r Denney asked if they knew who the shooter was at the time. Chief Radford answered they had a suspicion that the shooter was still on scene and figured it was a hostile area. Chairman Labrador asked if the shooter was not restrained, was she still loose. Chief Radford answered she was still loose and in possession of the gun. There was no law enforcement on scene. Comm'r Carpenter asked what level of care did the patient need. Chief Radford answered he was intubated, sedated, and treated for a gunshot wound. Chairman Labrador asked how the nominee displayed exceptionally meritorious performance while on the duty. Chief Radford answered that they initiated patient care and did not wait for law enforcement to clear the scene.

No further discussion, the Chair tabled Items 4D and 4F for deliberation at the next meeting set for February 18, 2026.

Item 4G. – Sheriff Kevin Copperi and Lieutenant Lacroix introduced themselves and gave a presentation on the nomination of **Deputy Kobe Ricky**, nominated by the Valley County Sheriff's Office.

On the night of July 15, 2025, while assigned to the night shift at the Valley County Detention Center, Deputy Ricky was violently and unexpectedly attacked by an inmate in the booking area at approximately 2031 hours. The inmate was able to pin the Deputy on the ground and produced a concealed blade, and stated you want to die. Despite facing a deadly threat, Deputy Ricky continued to resist attack for over ninety seconds on the jail floor. Through continuous movement and strategic repositioning, he was able to escape the inmates hold and gain a position of advantage all while preventing the blade from making contact. Moments later, Sergeant Nelson arrived and assisted in securing the inmate in handcuffs. Deputy Ricky's professionalism and decisive actions

not only protected his own life but also prevented further danger to staff and inmates within the facility. Lieutenant Lacroix presented a video of the incident.

Chairman Labrador opened for discussion. Chairman Labrador asked what he was arrested for. Lt. Lacroix answered for battery and stealing. Chairman Labrador asked where was the weapon hidden. Lt. Lacroix answered in his cargo pants. Chair Labrador asked how is this exceptionally meritorious conduct while in the performance of his duty. Such as his training expectations. Lt. Lacroix answered that he did exactly what he was trained. The deputy remained claim, did not talk to the suspect, and let the suspect use up his energy. Sheriff Kevin Copperi added that is what is trained—professionalism. Comm'r Tester commented it sounded like the deputy was saying ok and asked if he was trying to deescalate the situation. Lt. Lacroix answered that was part of the training. Comm'r Carpenter asked if the deputy had a service weapon on him. Lt. Lacroix answered no, not inside the jail. Comm'r Carpenter asked if the deputy had a choice to open the door or not. Lt. Lacroix answered he did not. It would be the controller operator. Comm'r Denny asked how the inmate got the box knife. Lt. Lacroix answered he concealed it. Deputy Ricky did the intake search the night prior and missed it. Comm'r Denny asked what is the normal protocol of cuffing individuals if you get them out of the cell. Lt. Lacroix answered it depends on the situation. This person did not demonstrate any aggressive or violate behavior.

No further discussion, the Chair tabled Item 4G for deliberation at the next meeting set for February 18, 2026.

Item 4H. – Lieutenant Childers and Captain Daniels introduced themselves and gave a presentation on the nomination of **Officer Clark Belts**, nominated by the Nampa Police Department.

On August 16, 2023, Officer Clark Belts responded to the area of St. Luke's Hospital in Nampa to look for a male suspect who escaped the facility while on a mental hold. Nampa dispatch received multiple 911 calls from citizens reporting the suspect attempted to carjack them and had entered a restaurant. While inside the restaurant, the suspect obtained two kitchen knives. Officer Belts made a loop in the area and was informed by an individual that the suspect got into their car. With that, the suspect then got out of the car and charged two citizens with the knives raised. Officer Belts took the appropriate action to stop the threat. He had to make a split-second decision, evaluate the backdrop to make sure he could shoot. He shot the suspect and eliminated the threat. Officer Belts is now a firearm instructor, but he was not that day.

Chairman Labrador opened for discussion. Chairman Labrador asked what would have been the expectation of this officer. Lieutenant Childers answered the time he had to react and how he executed was above and beyond. Chairman Labrador asked how did the nominee display exceptionally meritorious conduct that day, higher than everybody else. Lieutenant Childers answered you only get the opportunity to prove your ability

when it presents itself. Comm'r Miller asked if he was awarded medal at the agency. Lieutenant Childers answered they did not award a medal.

No further discussion, the Chair tabled Item 4H for deliberation at the next meeting set for February 18, 2026.

Commission Recessed. Five-minute break.

Discussion. Chairman Labrador reminded the Commissioners that the remaining nominees submitted, are from the same incident. Multiple fire organizations responded to this tragic incident. Each application is listed by their nominating agency.

Item 4I. and Item 4J. – Fire Chief Kevin Croffoot, Union President Gabe Eckert, Union President Jarrod Pitt, and Deputy Chief Bill Deruyter introduced themselves and gave a presentation on the nominations of **Fire Captain Ernst Fritz Wiedenhoff**, nominated by the Northern Lakes Fire District and **Engineer David Tysdal**, nominated by the Coeur d'Alene Fire Department. There was no objection to present both.

On June 29, 2025, at approximately 1:21 PM, multiple fire organizations responded to a reported wildfire on Canfield Mountain near the Nettleton Gulch trailhead in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Captain Wiedenhoff arrived at the designated staging area before proceeding towards the command post when radio communications with both BC1 and BC3 were ineffective. After talking with Engineer Tysdal, he crawled on his hands and knees to another radio. Captain Wiedenhoff was able to alert incoming firefighters to not come up, that there was an active shooter. He requested law enforcement only. His actions are commendable and probably saved a lot of lives. Union President Pitt presented that Captain Wiedenhoff's primary concern that day was never for himself, it was for everybody else as well as Engineer Tysdal. Captain Wiedenhoff is not trained, has no prior military experience.

Chief Deruyter described the scene that day. Engineer Tysdal was talking with the crew to do more refon and formulating a plan. Unbeknownst to them, the assailant was right there. They did not know they were going to be ambushed. Engineer Tysdal was shot in the back. He was paralyzed. He had the presence of mind to key his radio with his chin to start warning people not to come up, describe the assailant, and the weapon that he used. Engineer Tysdal alerted Captain Wiedenhoff to the idea that this was an active shooter. That allowed Captain Wiedenhoff to get on the radio to message to keep people out and get law enforcement in.

Chairman Labrador asked what kind of training has changed since that day. Chief Croffoot answered situational awareness. Chief Deruyter answered there is no policy to cover what happened, no training that can cover what happened. Comm'r Miller asked if he could describe the parking area. Union President Eckert answered Canfield is to the east side of Coeur d'Alene. Big mountain, hiking and biking trails. It has an upper

and lower parking lot. The Battalion Chiefs and Engine 3 had relocated to the upper parking lot to better position themselves to protect residential neighborhood and citizens.

{Condensed audio was presented – Engineer Tysdal and Captain Wiedenhoff speaking.}

Comm'r Johnson asked was there additional gunfire when Captain Wiedenhoff arrived on the scene. Chief Croffoot answered yes. Chairman Labrador asked if Engineer Tysdal arrived first. Union President Eckert answered correct alongside then Chief Morrison and Chief Harwood along with Engine 14. Engineer Tysdal was shot first in the back and then the assailant murdered the two Battalion Chiefs. Chairman Labrador asked when did Captain Wiedenhoff come in. Chief Croffoot answered there was a lapse in radio traffic and he chose to go out there to assess the situation and relay the different information.

No further discussion, the Chair tabled Items 4I and 4J for deliberation at the next meeting set for February 18, 2026.

Item 4K. and Item 4L. – Fire Chief Tom Grief, Fire Chief Pete Holley, and Union President Gabe Eckert introduced themselves and gave a presentation on the nominations of **Battalion Chief John G. Morrison**, nominated by the Coeur d'Alene Fire Department and **Battalion Chief Frank Harwood**, nominated by the Kootenai County Fire & Rescue. There was no objection to present both.

On June 29, 2025, at approximately 1:21 PM, multiple fire organizations responded to a reported wildfire on Canfield Mountain near the Nettleton Gulch trailhead in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Discussion of the layout was previously presented. While they were actively engaged in this critical function development, developing fire suppression strategy with Engineer Tysdal, they were targeted by an assailant. In a deliberate premediated ambush, Chief Harwood and Chief Morrison were killed. Canfield Mountain is identified as target hazard, acknowledged as high-risk place or high-risk event. The upper parking lot where they were was actually a forward position for aggressive fire attack. That is not a place where you would find a Battalion Chief to set up command. Choosing that location to evacuate residents and navigate closer to the fire. The fire service focuses on protecting the community. When taking their oath they never in their mind thought that the public, who they took the oath to save, would turn against them. Chief Holley explained what makes these Chiefs exemplify exceptional meritorious conduct. These gentlemen performed at the highest level on a target hazard with so many layers.

Comm'r Carpenter asked what standard practice is. Union President Eckert answered it was to go up and start evacuating citizens. Standard practice for the Battalion Chief is to hang back and coordinate resources. They took it upon themselves to move forward. Comm'r Miller asked how far the fire was. Union President Eckert answered a couple of 100 yards up Cave Trail. Comm'r Carpenter asked how far the other parking lot is. Union President Eckert answered about a mile.

No further discussion, the Chair tabled Items 4K and 4L for deliberation at the next meeting set for February 18, 2026.

Item 4M., Item 4N., and Item 4O. – Sheriff Robert Norris, Undersheriff Nelson, and Captain Kevin Smart, presented via remotely, introduced themselves and gave a presentation on the nominations of **Deputy Harvey Ballman, Deputy Arek Brock, and Deputy Joshua Orr**, nominated by the Kootenai County Sheriff's Office.

They discussed the fire staff spoke about the Canfield incident previously. The Kootenai County Sheriff's Office personnel that were involved are three members of the SWAT team. Two were assigned to patrol, Deputy Ballman who has a canine assigned to him was the first to arrive on the scene south of the upper parking lot. At the time, there were reports of multiple shooters with high-powered rifles at unknown locations. Deputy Ballman requested our BearCat and additional SWAT resources to respond to his position. Deputy Orr and Detective Brock (who was off duty that day) responded, met Deputy Ballman and quickly put a plan together to move up the parking lot to retrieve and extract wounded firefighters, Engineer Tysdal and Captain Wiedenhoff, who had previously broadcast the active shooter on radio traffic. While extracting Engineer Tysdal they believed they were shot at and they took the initiative to lay down suppressive gun fire. They successfully brought Engineer Tysdal and Captain Wiedenhoff back down to the lower point where they were transported by medical personnel for treatment. The three deputies made another assessment of the scene and went back up to the area to extract five residents safely back down to the lower area. As the scene continued to unfold, a decision was made by the SWAT personnel to again go back up to the area of the incident while the fire was approaching and extract the two bodies of Chief Morrison and Chief Harwood. After all these events occurred, an entity of law enforcement found the deceased suspect roughly 70 yards up the hill at a hidden vanity point. During the course of the investigation, they found the suspect in fact set the fire to draw in fire personnel and had planned some type of heroic event. The suspect had sketchings showing that he had pre-planned that parking lot ambush and it was a pre-mediated attack. Undersheriff Nelson explained what the actions would be of a normal deputy response. They would have waited for additional assets or more SWAT personnel. The deputies proceeded up the hill with limited resources to engage in an unknown number of offenders with unknown number of weapons.

Chairman Labrador opened for discussion. Chairman Labrador asked when they arrived, if the shooter was still shooting, or you just were not sure. Undersheriff Nelson answered no, active shooting was going on until they proceeded to go up to extract Engineer Tysdal and Captain Wiedenhoff. They believed they were fired upon by both sound and evidentiary value around them.

No further discussion, the Chair tabled Items 4M, 4N, and 4O for deliberation at the next meeting set for February 18, 2026.

Item 5 – Discuss and Schedule Deliberations and Select Date. Chairman Labrador and Commissioners approved February 18, 2026, at 2:30pm for the date and the Attorney General’s Office for the location.

Item 6 – Discuss and Approve 2026 Ceremony Location and Date. Chairman Labrador and Commissioners approved September 1, 2026, at 2:00pm for the date and the Lincoln Auditorium for the location.

Item 7 – There being no further business, Chairman Labrador adjourned the meeting at 12:05 p.m. Comm’r. Brad Johson moved to approve. Comm’r. Carson Tester seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.