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Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting on bills that I am developing for the upcoming legislative session in February 2018. I am in the process of developing these bills, so I am still seeking input from other legislators and the public. Because this is a budget session, our focus should be on the budget, which means fewer individual bills are usually carried by legislators. In fact, during a budget session members of the House can file only five bills each. I usually develop a bill based upon my experiences in the Legislature and issues brought forth from my constituents.

My first bill has to do with Wyoming contractor preference laws, and was brought to me by local contractors. In Wyoming there exists law which requires that Wyoming contractors be given some preference over out-of-state contractors, on publicly funded construction projects. I fully support these laws, because I believe when we spend Wyoming tax dollars those dollars should benefit Wyoming businesses first. Due to economies of scale, large contractors in other states have a competitive advantage over smaller Wyoming contractors. Wyoming contractor preference laws can raise the cost of a project, but current law allows for only a 5% preference, which is a small margin. Out-of- state contractors have also gotten more nimble at finding the loopholes in current laws.

Now that Wyoming's boom has turned bust, it seems a good time to have a discussion about loopholes in the law, and whether a 5% preference is enough. My bill would do three things: First, it would raise the preference to a 10% preference. Second, it would eliminate the loophole that a Wyoming contractor can be called a Wyoming contractor simply by having an administrative building in the state. Third, it would make it harder to bypass Wyoming preference laws by packaging multiple item bids with items no Wyoming supplier has.

My second bill has to do with the opioid crisis that is occurring in Wyoming and around the nation. This issue was brought to me by our local prevention folks and law enforcement.

Around the nation, states are creating Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs) to help track opioid use. Wyoming has a PDMP, but it is not as robust as other states' tracking programs. Only retail pharmacies are required to report, but there are many other dispensers of opioids. North Dakota seems to have a well-respected program, so I tailored my bill after its law, with one exception. My bill will also require prescribers to query the tracking program prior to prescribing an opioid, which is consistent with laws in several states. I leave the details of this query up to the various practitioner boards through the rule making process, to allow those most familiar with the issue to create the regs. The bill is also very light handed on prescribers who fail to query the tracking system, in order to make it more of a best-practice act. The bill emphasizes cross-state cooperation in monitoring drug prescriptions, because that seems to be the biggest hole in our current efforts. I know that I am wading into deep water with this bill. I just hope to open up the conversation about reducing the current epidemic. I am still working with other legislators and medical professionals on this bill.

My third bill has to do with the onslaught of commercial drift boats that are bouncing down streams in Sublette County, and around the state. The fly fishing guide business has become an industry, as popularity for the sport has exploded. In the last couple of years I have received requests from local guides to help resolve this issue. In the past year, fishing outfitters have formed their own organization, called the Wyoming Fishing Outfitter and Guides Association (WyFOG). Fishing outfitters are not regulated like hunting outfitters, because there has always been a resistance by fishing outfitters to be regulated. It appears that may be changing. Currently, the Wyoming Game and Fish has only three options to deal with angler impacts on a fishery. It can set creel limits, designate type of bait or hook, and close a river to fishing, but it cannot limit the number of fishing boats on a river. My bill would give the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission the authority to regulate the number of commercially guided boats on a river to protect the river's fishery, if commercial boats represented over 75% of boat traffic on the river. The bill would also require public hearings, prior to the implementation of any regulations, in a community in the river drainage where regulation is being proposed. I have

run this bill by the WyFOG folks and some local outfitters. We do not want to stifle tourism, but we also do not want to ruin the fishery in the New Fork and Green Rivers.

This spring, I attended a conference in Pinedale on wildlife migration and wildlife/vehicle collisions. Wyoming is blessed with some of the longest intact large ungulate migrations in the United States, but we kill an alarming number of those animals with our vehicles. This conference, put on by the Wyoming Department of Transportation, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, and several NGOs, was designed to drill down and find the most important high collision areas in the state. Sublette County has a state-of-the art wildlife/vehicle mitigation project between Forty Rod and Duck Creek on US Highway 191. This well-designed system includes tall fences, two overpasses and multiple underpasses to facilitate large ungulate migration, but it cost a LOT of money. The conference looked at ideas to reduce wildlife collisions, and how government and private money might help pay for these mitigation tools.

As I thought about funding wildlife collision projects, I thought about the many visitors Wyoming has enjoy our wildlife in Yellowstone National Park. In 2016, over 4 million people visited Yellowstone National Park. Where do most of the large ungulates winter that these 4 million visitors view in the summer? Well, the answer is outside Yellowstone in Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho, because Yellowstone has a pretty inhospitable climate in the winter. As we know pronghorn from Grand Teton National Park migrate south through Sublette County. Shouldn't the world's visitors to Yellowstone help fund wildlife conservation in the three states? Shouldn't they also help fund large carnivore conflicts as those species move farther away from the Park? I am writing a resolution to request that our Governor work with Montana and Idaho to convince Congress and the National Park Service to add a wildlife conservation sticker to the admittance fee for Yellowstone to help defray wildlife conservation practices in the three states, such as more fences and overpasses along high collision areas within wildlife migration corridors.

I would be interested in your comments and concerns on these or other issues. I can be reached at albert@albertsommers.com or by phone at 307-360-7060.

Thanks

Albert Sommers