

2-2-2017

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you from Cheyenne on Thursday, Feb. 2. Today in Committee of the Whole we heard HB 288, which increases fees and licenses under the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Part of the Appropriation Committee's plan to cut our General Fund budget is to move agencies off the General Fund, and back to their own fee structures. In the early 2000s, the Game and Fish Department operated on its own funding streams, primarily hunting and fishing licenses. However, as the state developed more endangered species issues, and during a period when the state saw increased revenues, many of these non-game budgets moved to the General Fund. This reflected an acknowledgement by the state that these issues were not just sportsmen issues. In order to fix our structural deficit in state government, the Appropriations Committee has proposed fee and license increases that will help shift Game and Fish back to its own dollars. HB 288 will generate about \$500,000 less than Game and Fish would need to break even in this trade, which means the department will make up the difference with its own programs. Ninety-two percent of this fee increase will be paid by people out-of-state; the price of an in-state deer license will increase by just one dollar. As we work to move agencies back to their own fee structures, including brand inspectors, it will result in increased user fees, or no service at all. For the most part, I have supported these fee increases, as well as cutting the current budgets. We have done both. There have been few easy decisions.

HB 267 would have increased the fee for a corporation license from \$50 to \$150. We heard this bill in committee yesterday, and amended the bill to reflect only a \$25 increase, to a \$75 license. This bill will be heard in Committee of the Whole tomorrow. Through the news media, the Secretary of State expressed disapproval of this bill and its sponsor in a manner that I have never witnessed before. I supported the increase to \$75 in committee, but will listen to the debate tomorrow. I can be reached at [albert@albertsommers.com](mailto:albert@albertsommers.com)

Good night.