

2-23-2017

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you from snowy Cheyenne on Thursday, Feb. 23. I had the good fortune to eat breakfast with the Sublette County Conservation District crew this morning, and get an update on the happenings in the home county. It is always good to see Sublette County folks while in Cheyenne, and I encourage you to contact me if you are headed to Cheyenne while I am in session.

The Joint Appropriation Conference Committee met on the budget today, and we agreed upon the most difficult items where there had been disagreement. We negotiated the Senate's position of a \$91.5 million cut to K12 education as of July 1, 2017, down to a \$25 million cut in fiscal year 2018 and \$20 million in fiscal year 2019. In essence we agreed to half the cut, with an extended implementation. We also agreed to a recalibration of the funding model this summer. However, one education funding bill is left alive in both the Senate and the House. If one of those survives the process, it will supersede the decisions made in the budget bill.

The Appropriations Conference Committee also agreed to eliminate the Senate's position on the 4 percent pay cut to state employees, and replace it with an increase in state position eliminations through an attrition process the Governor would control. We firmly believe that cutting state employee salaries, at a time when we are asking them to do more, was simply unfair.

We still have two issues to resolve. They are how to handle funding for providers of developmentally disabled services, and retiree Medicare compensation. We expect to resolve those issues tomorrow. I have been doubtful that the House and Senate could reach resolution so soon, and we still have a long way to go to solve the K12 funding crisis, but today gave me hope that we can reach some compromises in the next year. Wyomingites do know how to roll up their sleeves and solve differences.

Good night for now.