

2-16-2018

Hello, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you from Cheyenne on Friday, February 16. Today was the last day a bill could be introduced into its house of origin. I supported HB185 and 186 on Introduction today. These bills would help modernize spending policies on the Permanent Mineral Trust Fund. We have saved billions of dollars, and in this economic downturn we need to put that money to use. Both bills passed Introduction.

I also supported Introduction for House Joint Resolution 4, a constitutional amendment dealing with education funding. Currently, 66 percent of mineral royalties generated from state lands go directly into the constitutionally inviolate school permanent trust fund, helping to build that account. We currently spend the income off that account, more than \$80 million a year, which is equivalent to a half-penny sales tax. The constitutional amendment would have suspended the flow of mineral royalty money into permanent savings for six years, and allowed it to help cover our shortfall in education funding. I do not like messing with the Wyoming Constitution, but this diversion would support schools and reduce the need for future taxes for education. The bill failed Introduction.

I did not support HB189, which would have repealed the death penalty. I do not like the death penalty for two reasons. First, it costs the state a tremendous amount of money to prosecute these cases, which drag on for years. Second, I do not believe that Wyoming should ask an employee of the state to kill another human being who poses no further risk to humanity. However, I voted against the bill because I have heard from more Sublette County voters who support the death penalty than from those who are opposed. The bill failed Introduction.

We must keep to a deadline for bill introductions, in order for us to complete our work in a given number of days. That means a number of bills will die without being heard. Often controversial bills are put at the bottom of the list. Bills not heard for an introductory vote proposed increasing taxes on lodging, tobacco, wind, and real estate transfer. Another was a comprehensive tax bill. Other bills left behind included several constitutional amendments: to repeal our constitutional mandate to fund education, to set term limits, and to create a

taxpayer bill of rights. Two other bills that died on the vine would have codified gay marriage rights, and further defined free speech on college campuses.

More than 200 bills were numbered for Introduction, too many for a budget session. We will begin floor debate of the budget bill on Monday, February 19. I can be reached at albert@albertsommers.com

Thank you