

2-23-2018

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you from Cheyenne on Friday, at the end of the second week of the legislature. More bills were discussed today in second reading.

HB06 made State information and research on big game animals and their locations confidential. This passed today under second reading.

HB31 extended the deadline for the Hathaway Scholarship, the primary financial support Wyoming students can get while attending college. HB153 expanded the Hathaway Scholarship to create opportunities for some out-of-state students attending college in Wyoming to also receive some financial support. Both bills passed second reading today.

My bill, HJ05, also passed second reading. HJ05 asks for the creation of a wildlife conservation fee for people visiting Yellowstone National Park. Yellowstone receives an extremely large number of visitors every year, so a fee like this would greatly support wildlife management and conservation efforts in the three states bordering the Park. This bill must pass one final vote in the house next week. It received mention today in a New York Times opinion piece about wildlife migration in the West: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/23/opinion/protecting-americas-animal-migrations.html>

HB157 deals with sexual offenses by healthcare providers. It authorizes the Board of Nursing to take disciplinary action against any nurse guilty of sexual misconduct. It also requires other health licensing boards to review their existing rules on sexual offenses by health care providers and asks them to make changes, if necessary. This bill passed its second reading today.

We finished third and final reading of the budget bill in the House at about 8:30 Friday night. Over 100 amendments were brought forward between second and third reading. This is the opportunity for the members of the body to evaluate and propose changes to the budget that my Appropriations Committee developed. The biggest changes made by the House were the addition of \$7.5 million for those who provide services to the developmentally disabled, and \$2 million for suicide prevention. I was a co-sponsor of a bill to help fund suicide prevention, and I

supported this budget amendment, even though it is my job on the Appropriations Committee to support the budget as recommended. We began the session with a budget that had increased funding to the Department of Health and Department of Family Services by \$90 million. Appropriations decided that in the last two years, we had made cuts that had gone too far. The floor of the House added at least \$10 million more to these departments, which shows the community support to provide such services. We will now have to reconcile differences between the House and Senate on the Budget Bill. The long term question is: how are we going to pay for this?

The House will not be in session on Monday, but will resume on Tuesday and will remain in session for at least two more weeks.

I can be reached at albert@albertsommers.com

Thank you.