

2-9-2018

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you from Cheyenne, on the eve of the 2018 Budget Session of the Wyoming Legislature, which begins Monday, February 12. I hope to provide regular updates to Sublette County throughout the session.

In previous updates I have mentioned the work of the Appropriations Committee I serve on, and the budget recommendations made to date. The State's improving economy through most of last year has resulted in projected revenue increases of about \$484 million for the two-biennium period (17/18 and 19/20). This increased revenue, combined with the state's ability to divert some savings streams from its permanent savings accounts, allows us to balance our budget – with additional modest spending from our Legislative Stabilization Reserve (“Rainy Day”) Account to the tune of about \$245 million. The Appropriations Committee will make final revisions to the budget bill on Monday, prior to its release to the full Legislature.

I am the prime sponsor of two bills. House Bill 95 helps ensure that in-state suppliers of materials for state, county, town, and school district funded projects have an opportunity to bid, but gives the State Construction Department the ability to approve an exception. House Joint Resolution 5 would request that the Director of the National Park Service enter into an agreement with the states of Wyoming, Montana and Idaho to impose a wildlife conservation fee on Yellowstone National Park visitors. Wildlife in the Park moves in and out of Park boundaries; it seems reasonable for the Park's four million visitors to help support wildlife conservation and conflict reduction in the states.

I am co-sponsoring a few bills, one of which seems to be controversial. Senate File 61 was brought to me by Senator Affie Ellis, a female legislator from Laramie County, requesting my co-sponsorship. Wyoming law currently requires hunters to wear an exterior item of clothing that is fluorescent orange. SF 61 would simply allow hunters to have the option to wear fluorescent pink. Senator Ellis received a request from constituents seeking the ability to utilize pink while hunting. Senator Ellis found that Wisconsin had legalized the color in 2015 based upon a study by the University of Wisconsin, which confirmed that fluorescent pink reflected light as well or

better than orange. I have received several comments from Sublette County women that this bill is either sexist or condescending, and I assure you that was not my intent. They rightfully point out, and I agree, that there are more important issues for women than pink hunting garments.

Currently about 210 bills are available for review on the Legislative website, <http://legisweb.state.wy.us/2018/billreference/BillReference.aspx?type=ALL>, with about 130 of those originating in the House. Bills that may be of special interest to my constituents include the donation of an antelope hunting license, a change in the extraterritorial jurisdiction of municipalities, legalization of Bitcoin, a clearer definition of penalties for edible marijuana products, two license plate creation bills that provide money for rest areas and wildlife, an increased tobacco tax, definition of the crime of child endangerment resulting in abuse or sexual assault, further definition of the use of seat belts by minors, restricting the salary for school district superintendents, repealing the Beef Checkoff penalty, creating a real-estate transfer tax in Teton County, prohibition of sanctuary cities, a couple of bills on election law, and many more. As always I look forward to your comments, and can be reached at albert@albertsommers.com

Thanks

Albert