

7-17-18

Hello Sublette County this is Albert Sommers reporting to you on the interim work of the Wyoming Legislature. Last session two bills passed the Legislature that were designed to curb opioid addiction in the State of Wyoming. The nation has seen an increasing problem with opioid abuse and overdose.

Senate File 83 was developed by myself and Sublette Senator Fred Baldwin, with the help of others. This bill was signed into law in order to accomplish three goals. First, the bill required all dispensers, including emergency rooms and veterinarians, to report opioids and certain other controlled substances they dispense to Wyoming's controlled substance tracking program. Tracking programs like this are often referred to as PDMPs, Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs. PDMPs can be utilized by the Board of Pharmacy to ensure opioids are not mis-prescribed. Second, the bill required all prescribers licensed to prescribe controlled substances to register to utilize the PDMP. Third, the bill added Schedule V drugs, such as some codeine cough syrups, to the list of substances reportable to the PDMP. This bill did include veterinarians in those required to report, but there are issues with including them in the mix.

Senate File 78, which also passed last legislative session, created the Wyoming Opioid Addiction Task Force. The members of this task force include Legislators, the Wyoming Department of Health, the Wyoming Attorney General's office, the public, a physician, a pharmacist, a Board of Pharmacy member, the chairman of the Advisory Council on Palliative Care, and an individual engaged in the treatment of chronic pain. Senator Fred Baldwin and I were selected as two of the four legislative representatives. The task force will end in December of 2019, which gives it two interims to develop strategies to solve some of the issues surrounding opioid addiction and overdose.

The Opioid Addiction Task Force had its first meeting in Riverton on July 9-10. The first important message that I heard was that the opioid issues in Wyoming were really secondary to the number of methamphetamine issues. We clearly heard that substance abuse treatment

was critical to solving all of these problems, and that declining state budgets have impacted treatment in the communities. We heard that while Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) was the preferred substance abuse treatment for opioid abuse, doctors in Wyoming were reluctant to engage in the practice, because it can consume their practice and create a stigma. Wyoming likely has a shortage of doctors willing to provide MAT. Medication-assisted treatment, including opioid treatment programs (OTPs), combines behavioral therapy and medications to treat substance use disorders. Substance abuse treatment will be a continuing discussion in this task force and the Joint Health Committee of the Legislature.

The Legislators on the Opioid Addiction Task Force, after feedback from Task Force members and the public, asked staff to create several bill drafts to be discussed at the next meeting. Bill drafts will include a bill requiring a query of the PDMP by prescribers before opioids can be prescribed; a bill limiting the number of days and quantity for an opioid prescription; a bill requiring a small amount of continuing education for opioid prescribers, dispensers, and nurses; a bill exempting veterinarians from required PDMP reporting; and other bills to clarify existing law. The task force will also make a recommendation to the Joint Appropriations Committee to increase the staff of the Board of Pharmacy to ensure the PDMP is working efficiently. The Board of Pharmacy staff is paid through user fees, and there appears to be sufficient money available in the board's funds to cover the cost of the position.

As the Opioid Addiction Task Force moves forward I hope to get feedback from our local law enforcement, public, prevention specialists, health care providers, and substance abuse treatment specialists. I hope to set up a meeting of these folks to discuss this important topic. I can be reached at albert@albertsommers.com and 307-360-7060.