

2-2-2019

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you on Saturday the 2nd. Last week was extremely intense, and I was in committee meetings beyond 10:30 pm on three nights. The House and the Senate finished work on the mirror budget bills Thursday. Remember, each chamber of the Legislature works the same version of the supplemental budget bill simultaneously. Now that we have completed this task, a conference committee will be appointed by both chambers to hammer out the differences in each body's budget bill. There are substantial differences, and the debates will be lively as each chamber protects its positions. I thought I would take this weekend opportunity to seek your comments on a few bills we are likely to hear on Monday in Committee of the Whole. Monday is the last day that House bills will be heard in House Committee of the Whole. Crossover begins on Tuesday, and we will then be hearing Senate Files, and the Senate will start debating House bills. Below is a list of the more controversial bills we may hear on Monday. Please provide me feedback.

[HB0103](#) – This bill changes the reporting requirements for abortions. It would add the race, ethnicity, and marital status of the pregnant woman. Further, it would impose a substantial fine for failure of the doctor to meet the reporting requirements. This bill seems extremely onerous, and the inclusion of race and ethnicity is problematic.

[HB0106](#) – This bill would alter the date when a citizen can change his party affiliation prior to a primary election. Currently, citizens can change their party affiliation at the polls on the day of the primary. This bill would require citizens to declare their party by May 1 of the year the primary is held. I have concerns about this bill. In this great country, citizens still get to choose their party, the party does not get to choose who can enroll.

[HB0230](#) – This bill would make it illegal for an employer to discriminate against an employee or potential employee based upon their gender identity or sexual orientation. However, this bill would exempt religious entities from having to comply with this law.

[HB0282](#) – This bill would tax cigarettes an additional 50 cents per pack, and would tax vaping material the same as cigars and dry snuff. I support this bill, as it would bring vapes into the tax system. Vape usage has become an epidemic in our schools.

[HB0284](#) – This bill would legalize certain video gaming devices that currently exist in bars across Wyoming and in Sublette County. The Wyoming Attorney General issued an opinion that these devices were gambling devices and not games of skill. This bill is designed to legalize these devices much like the pari-mutuel historic horse racing machines were legalized several years ago. The bill would allow only two machines per bar, and would limit the maximum prize to \$1500. Counties and towns would have the ability to prohibit these machines by simply passing a resolution. Bar owners around the county have called me asking me to support the bill, and residents have emailed me in opposition to the bill. The pari-mutuel organizations don't like this bill, because it eliminates their monopoly on gambling devices in most counties. This bill seems like a good compromise, but I do not like the fact that the Lottery Commission would be the regulating agency. I have never supported gambling bills, but you can gamble on your smart phone. I think Wyoming needs to figure out how to regulate gambling in better way than we do currently.

[HB0293](#) – This bill would create a funding mechanism for the University of Wyoming to replace its student dorms, which are 40-50 years old. The bill expands its bonding capacity through a shifting of revenue sources and a loan from our Legislative Stabilization Reserve Account. This project will likely cost \$250-300 million for the first 2,000 beds.

[HB0308](#) – This bill would shift different revenue streams toward education to help solve the education funding deficit. This bill has no new taxes, and I am a co-sponsor.