

2/28/2019

Hello Sublette County,

This is Albert Sommers in Cheyenne on Thursday the 28th. Wednesday was supposed to be the last day of the 65th General Session, but our work took us past midnight and we did not adjourn until 1:58 a.m. today. We used one of the extra days we had available for the 2020 session.

On 3rd reading, we considered the final eight bills of the year, passing four and failing four. The four that passed were:

[SF 134](#) – Severance tax – exemption. This was the last bill considered before adjournment. It would have allowed a one-year exemption from severance tax for oil and gas wells that had been shut in for 18 months. The bill was designed to stimulate some activity in the older oil fields in Wyoming. The bill ultimately failed when the House did not agree to a joint conference committee compromise and the Senate was unwilling to appoint another committee. I supported this bill, because I thought it was worth trying a new mechanism to stimulate some investment in our old fields. The liability to the state coffers was limited to one year, and the bill had reporting requirements and a sunset clause to ensure the program would be reviewed.

[SF 122](#) – Wyoming Works Program. This bill was a priority for Governor Gordon as a workforce training bill. It creates a grant program for non-traditional students to seek completion of credential programs developed by the community colleges. I supported this bill, and amended it a couple of times to ensure that the programs had support from the community and industry. I also amended the appropriation to a smaller amount, so the Legislature could evaluate the program before putting more money into it.

[SF 111](#) - Community colleges - bachelor of applied science programs. This will allow community colleges to confer 4-year bachelor of applied science degree programs in areas determined by the community colleges. I like the idea of a few 4-year programs at community colleges, but this

bill provided no limits on how many programs could be developed. The State funds community colleges through a funding model based upon enrollment. Theoretically, these programs will draw more students and cost the state more money. I am not sure Wyoming can afford to have seven more four-year institutions in the state, without some sideboards on the number of programs that can be developed. We have a deficit in our K12 education funding system, so I worry about the impact of SF111 to the State's budget deficits. I voted against this bill, after several amendments failed that would have either limited the number of programs or required an exception budget process to fund these programs.

[SF 31](#) – Revisor's Bill. This bill corrects mistakes found in statute

Bills of note that the House failed on 3rd reading included [SF 161](#) – Management Council membership, and [SF 144](#) – Medicaid and SNAP eligibility-requirements. I did not support either of these bills. Senate File 144 would have requested the federal government to allow a work requirement for people on Medicaid. People currently on Medicaid will need health care, but if they were disqualified from Medicaid for not working, our local hospitals and clinics would have to provide that service for free. Medical facilities in the state are already struggling, and don't need the burden of more uncompensated care. In particular, this bill did not adequately address Medicaid recipients with mental health issues, who sometimes have a hard time holding a job.

We also considered several overrides to the Governor's budget line-item vetoes. The House overrode the Governor on four vetoes. The Senate accepted two but rejected two of the House overrides. In the end, the Senate and the House agreed to override two of the Governor's line-item vetoes. The Governor had vetoed the Legislature's elimination of two positions in the State Engineer's office. That office had spent the money for those two positions on other personnel. That is why the Legislature stood firm in eliminating the positions. The other veto override was more of a technical correction.

One of the last things we did was to complete a State Capital Construction Bill, [SF 162](#). This bill provides funding for state projects like the Veterans Home in Buffalo, Community Colleges, a roof replacement at one of the prisons, storm water rerouting around the capitol building, and other state building maintenance.

For the final status of all bills, visit <https://www.wyoleg.gov/Legislation/2019>

This is my final press release of the 2019 General Session of the 65th Wyoming Legislature. It is a pleasure to serve Sublette County in the Wyoming House of Representatives.

I can be reached at albert@albertsommers.com with questions or concerns.

Thank you