

1/7/2019

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you on the eve of the 2019 legislative session. Today, I had the good fortune to see Governor Gordon, Secretary of State Buchanan, Treasurer Meier, Auditor Racines, and Superintendent of Public Instruction Balow be sworn into office by the Chief Justice of the Wyoming Supreme Court. The ceremony reinforced my belief in our great Nation's form of democracy. It is very powerful to see governmental transfer of power in the United States, and how seamlessly and peacefully we do it.

Tomorrow, January 8, the House and Senate will hold elections for their constitutional offices, which include President of the Senate, Vice-President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, and Speaker Pro Tempore. I am being nominate for Speaker Pro Tempore. Supreme Court Justices will administer the oath of office to all of us in the Legislature tomorrow. It is a real honor to serve Sublette County and Wyoming in the House of Representatives.

We will begin work in the Legislature the afternoon after we are sworn in. The session lasts about two months, and we will discuss a myriad of issues. Please provide me input and comments along the way. I can be reached at [albert@albertsommers.com](mailto:albert@albertsommers.com).

Thank you

1/8/2018

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you on the eve of Governor Gordon's State of the State address, and Chief Justice Davis's State of the Judiciary report. This gives the two co-equal branches of government, the executive and courts, the ability to present their positions to the Legislature, which is the third co-equal branch of government. The checks and balances created by the founding fathers of this state and nation are incredible to watch in action. It really gives you a renewed faith in the process.

Today, January 8, members of the Legislature were sworn into office by members of the Wyoming Supreme Court. In the House of Representatives, Steve Harshman of Casper was elected to his second term as Speaker of the House and I was elected to the position of Speaker Pro Tempore. It was a great honor to be unanimously elected by my peers to a leadership position, and even more so because it was a vote by all members from both parties of the Wyoming House of Representatives. My speech to House members was about maintaining decorum and civility as we work for the people.

After the "pomp and circumstance," the House began work, and the Speaker began introducing bills into the session. We wasted no time, and by this evening the House Appropriations Committee was debating bills in committee. Included were two bills related to reimbursing legislators for their expenses. We have not seen an increase in our per diem rate for several years, and the current \$109/day often fails to cover even the cost of lodging. The new rate would meet the federal standard rate, starting at \$149/day. We also passed a bill out of committee that would allow legislators to submit lodging and mileage expenses for traveling to constituent events, or legislators could opt for the current \$750/quarter year allowance. We also passed a bill out of committee that would allow a transportation fund account to be invested in a manner that would generate more dollars over the long haul. Goodnight for now.

I can be reached at [albert@albertsommers.com](mailto:albert@albertsommers.com)

Thank you

1/9/2019

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting from Cheyenne after Governor Gordon's State of the State report. A highlight of all State of the State speeches I have been fortunate to witness is the Governor's introduction of individual Wyoming citizens he wishes to honor and thank. These are people who have provided an extraordinary service to the State of Wyoming, and seeing them reinforces our belief in humanity. Governor Gordon also spoke about our budget shortfalls and the need to close those gaps through improving efficiency in state government and modernizing our revenue flows. The Leadership of the House and Senate emphasized the same points when they met with the press after Governor Gordon's address. Governor Gordon seemed to support many of the supplemental budget requests that Governor Mead had placed into his budget, including an inflationary adjustment to K12 education, an increase in salaries for state employees, and initiatives at UW.

We started Committee of the Whole today, and passed five bills to second reading. Of note were bills that simplified the cigarette tax code, cleaned up the Nuclear Regulatory Agreement, and designated lands for a National Guard Museum.

Tomorrow, my Joint Appropriations Committee will begin meeting three times a day, in preparation for finalizing the budget that will be presented to the full Legislature. I can be reached at [albert@albertsommers.com](mailto:albert@albertsommers.com)

Thank you

1/10/2019

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you on Thursday from Cheyenne. Currently, the Legislature holds its sessions in the Jonah Financial Center (originally a K-Mart), our temporary capitol. Today, members of the House of Representatives toured the restoration work going on in our real capitol building. We went to the renovated House Chamber, did roll call, said our opening prayer, and recited the Pledge of Allegiance. The House Chamber décor has been restored to the 1917 motif. We saw restoration specialists who were hand painting, with small brushes, the original patterns on the walls. Also restored to its 1890 decor is the original room that served as the House Chamber, where Wyoming's Constitution was crafted and where a vote of the House gave women the right to vote. After our opening ceremony, we returned to the Jonah Building to began work.

I can feel the weight of Wyoming's past and the responsibility of my office when I enter the capitol. The Jonah Building has been functional, but it is not the capitol. We will be back in our beloved capitol building for the 2020 session, and I hope folks from back home will make a point to come see it.

Let me refresh your memory on how a bill moves through the Legislature. With the help of our Legislative Service Office, a legislator crafts a bill based on his or her own experience, or arising from an issue brought by a constituent, agency, or advocacy group. The bill is then numbered, and if it finds favor with the presiding officer of the chamber (President of the Senate, or Speaker of the House), the bill will be introduced and assigned it to one of ten standing committees.

If the legislator's luck continues to hold, the bill will find favor with the chairman of the committee where the bill was sent, and that chairman will schedule it to be heard. The legislator then presents his or her bill to the committee, and the committee will pass, amend and pass, or fail the bill.

Next, if the legislator's bill passes committee, it proceeds to the whole body (Senate or House), and if the Majority Floor Leader approves, it will be debated in Committee of the Whole. The body can amend the bill in Committee of the Whole, on Second Reading, and on Third Reading. At the end of Third Reading, the bill goes back to its body of origin for a final vote.

If the bill passes the body of origin, it moves back to the other chamber and goes through same process. Even after it passes both chambers, the Governor can decide to veto the bill. Long story short, it is hard to pass a bill into law, which is as it should be.

I can be reached at [albert@albertsommers.com](mailto:albert@albertsommers.com)

Thank you

1/11/2019

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you on Friday, January 11, from Cheyenne. Today we passed five bills through Third Reading: the first bills that have passed the House Chamber this session. These included HB27, which allows the Transportation Enterprise Program Account to be invested in Pool A. Pool A was created a few years ago with the purpose of providing a higher rate of return for some of the State's smaller savings accounts, such as the Wyoming Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund, the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust Fund, and the Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund. Pool A was designed to garner a better rate of return than more liquid accounts like our "Rainy Day" Fund.

Today in Committee of the Whole, two bills were debated – a bill on virtual education and a bill on brand recording notices. HB48 would have eliminated the requirement that the Wyoming Livestock Board send a certified letter to a brand owner at the time the second notice for brand renewal is sent out. This requirement was placed in statute because an old family ranch lost its brand by not receiving a brand renewal notice. Brand renewals occur every 10 years and are on a staggered basis, which makes tracking the renewal date difficult. The Livestock Board wanted to quit the practice of sending a certified letter because of the expense. Nearly every rancher in the House spoke against this bill, including me, because we felt more comfortable with a certified letter. I did like a provision in the bill that required an email be sent in addition to a mailing, but the bill was ultimately voted down. I voted against it. I am filing a brand recording bill of my own that will extend the delinquency period before a brand is declared abandoned. The intent of my bill is to give the Livestock Board more time to find and notify a brand owner who has not renewed their brand.

I drafted a bill dealing with intra-county brand inspection but have decided not to file it. Currently, there is a conflict in statute related to intra-county brand inspection. Peace officers can stop a livestock owner transporting animals in his own county and require him or her to produce a brand inspection (a piece of paper proving ownership) for the livestock being hauled. However, the law also says that no brand inspection paper is required to haul your own or your neighbor's livestock within the county where your ranch is located. Sublette County ranchers

haul their neighbor's livestock intra-county all the time, and no brand papers are required, but they can be stopped by law enforcement and theoretically be required to show proof of ownership. The Wyoming Livestock Board and some Sublette County ranchers did not like my bill, so I will not file it this session, but I have asked the Livestock Board to find a suitable solution for next session. I can be reached at [albert@albertsommers.com](mailto:albert@albertsommers.com).

Thank you