

3-23-2019

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting from Cheyenne on Saturday the 23rd. On March 21 and 22, I attended meetings of the Capitol Restoration Oversight Committee and the Management Council. I left Sublette County late in the afternoon of the 20th, and the nighttime drive across Wyoming with a full moon blazing was amazing. Governor Gordon called me on Thursday night to tell me he was considering declaring an ozone emergency on Friday near Boulder, due to several days of high ozone readings, but the ozone levels abated enough on Friday, so that emergency declaration has not happened as I write this. Both the Governor's office and the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality have called while I have been in Cheyenne to visit with me about Boulder's ozone levels. The state is monitoring this event carefully, but we will need a weather change to move the inversion out of the valley. I and other elected officials of Sublette County will continue to work with the state on this issue.

On Thursday, I attended the Capitol Restoration Oversight Committee meeting as it received an update from MOCA, which is the firm the state hired to oversee construction. The 5-year, \$300 million restoration of Wyoming's historical capitol and the Herschler administration building is near completion. On July 10, there will be a grand opening of the newly renovated capitol, and I hope folks from Sublette County will come to Cheyenne and be part of this historic moment, which occurs in the same year that Wyoming celebrates its 150th anniversary of women's suffrage. The renovation has reproduced the original decorative designs that appeared on the walls of the capitol when Wyoming was becoming a state. The publicly visible areas of the capitol will have period-correct furniture design as well. I truly hope that you folks come see this Wyoming treasure.

On Friday March 22, Management Council met to decide what interim topics each of the legislative committees will study this summer and fall. Management Council is a joint committee of the Legislature, comprising the legislative leadership from both the House and

Senate. Since I am Speaker Pro Tempore for the Wyoming House, I am a member of Management Council. These interim topics drive the agenda for next legislative session.

The Joint Education Committee's No. 1 priority will be to study the financial impacts to community colleges and the State of Wyoming from recent legislation allowing community colleges to create four-year applied baccalaureate programs.

The Joint Corporations Committee's No. 1 priority will be to study utilities. It will study utility rates, regulations and policies, including specific review of coal-fired power plants, net metering and wind farm developments.

The Joint Revenue Committee's No. 1 priority will be to analyze Wyoming's revenue streams and study implications of existing state fiscal structure and its relationship to economic diversification. The committee's No. 2 priority will be to study regulation and taxation of vapes/electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) in Wyoming, with a focus on youth access to vape products. Vape use by teens in Wyoming and around the nation has soared, which is creating an addiction crisis in our youth. This issue was my highest priority going into Friday's meeting.

The Joint Appropriations Committee's No. 1 priority will be to develop the 2021/22 biennial budget. Its No. 2 priority will be a review of multiple issues related to state contracting and leasing processes and procedures, primarily implemented by the Department of Administration and Information (A&I) and the State Construction Department (SCD).

The Joint Travel, Recreation, Wildlife, and Cultural Resources Committee's No. 1 priority will be to conduct a comprehensive examination of lawful wagering and gaming in the state. The committee will explore the concept of implementing a state-wide gaming commission. The committee's No. 2 priority will be to examine issues related to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. This will include a topic I brought, which is to examine licensing of fishing guides and allowing for the regulation of commercial boats on rivers.

The Joint Transportation, Highways, and Military Affairs Committee's No. 1 priority will be to study issues and receive updates from the Wyoming Military Department. The committee's No. 2 priority will be to study highway issues, which will include examining how to improve wildlife crossings on our highway system. This is an idea I brought to the committee, as we have seen great success in the Trappers Point project.

The Joint Agriculture Committee's No. 1 priority will be to review the educational program at the University of Wyoming's College of Agriculture, and to recommend priority degree programs. UW was once a leader in many areas of agriculture education and extension, but those programs have slipped backward.

The Joint Minerals, Business, and Economic Development Committee's No. 1 priority will be to examine modernizing Wyoming's oil and gas statutes after horizontal drilling revolutionized the industry. This revolution caused issues with leasing, applications for permit to drill (APDs), and bonding onto private property. The committee's No. 2 issue is to study the possibility and feasibility of the State of Wyoming assuming primacy for conducting environmental impact statements and environmental assessments for major federal actions in Wyoming. The committee's No. 3 priority will be to study an executive order, issued by the Governor in 2018, providing a framework for compensatory mitigation for impacts to greater sage grouse habitat in Wyoming.

The Joint Labor, Health, and Social Services Committee's No. 1 priority will be to examine ways to address the growing aging population in Wyoming, including long-term care facilities and workforce. The committee's No. 2 priority will be to study mental health and substance abuse treatment issues in Wyoming, which coincides with work I will be doing on the Opioid Task Force.

The Joint Judiciary Committee's No. 1 priority will be to study and consider recent opinions in which the Wyoming Supreme Court noted the absence of legislative action or called for legislative action. The committee will consider issues that the Wyoming Supreme Court raised

in the following cases: *Bohling v. State*; *Haskell v. State* (of special pertinence to Sublette County); *Davis v. State*; *Nitchman v. State*; *Cothren v. State (I and II)*; and *In re Inquest Birkholz v. Teton Co. Coroner*.

We also assigned interim study topics to several Select Committees. I can be reached at albert@albertsommers.com with questions or concerns.

Thank you