

2-14-2020

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting after the end of the first week of the 2020 Budget Session. The number of bills filed in the House and Senate total 398. This includes 256 bills in the House and 142 in the Senate. Today (Friday, February 14) was the deadline for bills to be introduced for debate. So far, more than 75 filed bills have failed to move forward this year, including

HB0055 - Fishing task force. This is a bill I asked the TRW Committee to sponsor this session. It would have created a task force to examine the issue of overcrowding on our rivers by guided fishing boats. The bill received a majority vote, but did not receive the 2/3 majority needed for introduction.

The House considered over 75 bills today. A few bills that I supported, and which passed introduction, included:

- HB 29, Change in party affiliation would change state law to require individuals who want to change their party affiliation/voter registration to do so by 14 days prior to a primary election. I supported this bill, because it was a compromise from bills brought in previous sessions.
- HB0227 - Per diem rates-2. This bill would raise the reimbursement rate for lodging and meals for legislators, boards, and commissions. Currently, the per diem rate is \$109 per day, which rarely covers lodging and three meals.
- HB0225 and HB0234 – Both of these bills deal with gambling. The House of Representatives now has three gambling bills to consider, which have been assigned to House Appropriations. We need to better regulate gambling in Wyoming, but should we create a Gaming Commission to regulate gambling?
- HB0246 - Made in Wyoming. This bill will establish the process to incorporate a Made in Wyoming label on Wyoming products.

- HB0244 - Beef check-off penalty-repeal. This bill would repeal the penalty for not paying for the Beef Check-off. I question the effectiveness of this program for beef producers, but will give it some more thought.

A few bills that I did not support, and which failed introduction, included:

- HJ007, Medicaid coverage – eligible low income adults would have amended the state constitution to allow for a vote by the general public on Medicaid expansion. As I have stated in the past, I remain concerned about expanding Medicaid during a time of declining state revenues.
- HB0240 - Tolling authority for I-80 – 2 would have allowed for tolling on I-80. I did not support this bill, because tolling I-80 could financially burden citizens that live along this interstate.
- HB0152 - Student hazing. This bill would have created criminal offenses for student hazing, but it appeared to duplicate existing laws, so I didn't support the bill.

I supported the following bill, but it failed introduction:

- HB0188 - Wage transparency. This bill would have prohibited employers from requiring employees to not disclose their own wages.

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

Thank you