

2-17-2020

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you from Cheyenne on the sixth day of the 2020 Budget Session. During the morning the House moved through Second and Third Reading, and in the afternoon, we heard a few bills on Committee of the Whole. Committee of the Whole is where the entire House debates and votes on a bill for the first time. The introduction process is not really debate, but mostly a very quick two-minute explanation, while Committee of the Whole is unlimited debate.

Some of the bills that I supported, and which passed Committee of the Whole, included:

- [HB0046](#) - Special education funding. This bill will lift the cap the Legislature placed on funding increases to special education. I believe we need to regulate the increase in special education funding, but I am not sure what the appropriate solution is. In the end I voted to remove the cap, and address the special education funding issue during recalibration next interim. Recalibration is when the Legislature reviews the K12 school funding model. It is mandated every five years.
- [HB0193](#) - Court automation fees. This bill would increase court fees to help pay for court technology upgrades needed to meet legislative mandates.

Today, my colleagues and I in the Appropriations Committee began the explanation of the budget during Committee of the Whole.

The Lodging Tax bill ([HB0134](#)) passed the House on Third Reading by a large margin, and will be headed to the Senate. This bill would put in place a state mandated 5 percent lodging tax, and allow town councils or county commissions to implement another 2 percent. Altogether, local lodging tax boards could maintain a current maximum 4 percent lodging tax. I have placed an amendment on the bill that allows the local governing body to choose between putting the second 2 percent to a vote of the people, or to a vote by the governing body. In the end, I voted against the bill, because my local communities did not support the bill.

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