

2-24-2020

Greetings Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you from Cheyenne on the eleventh day of the 2020 Budget Session. Today, in order to move forward, a bill must have been passed from a committee in its house of origin. Thursday, February 27 will be “crossover,” meaning that bills passed in the House will move to the Senate and vice versa. Any bill that has not passed out of its chamber of origin will not be further considered.

The House Appropriations Committee, on which I serve, met today to continue its meeting from Friday. We are working our way through consideration of two bills regarding gaming in Wyoming: HB 171, Wyoming gaming commission and HB 234, Gaming regulation. There has been quite a bit of debate this session regarding establishment of a Wyoming Gaming Commission. While this is a concept I have struggled with, I recognize that unregulated gambling continues to grow in Wyoming. I think we need to look at how we can enact fair regulations that curb bad actors and ensure taxpayers are reaping the benefits.

The House Appropriations Committee also considered HB 249, Investment of State Funds. This bill sets up a process for the State to consider the purchase of approximately one million surface acres and four million mineral acres from Occidental Petroleum. This land and the minerals were part of the original land grant to Union Pacific (UP) when it built the railroad across the nation. This parcel follows the UP Corridor and includes lands and minerals within Colorado and Utah. I have supported amendments in the bill, to ensure that the Legislature would have approval over the purchase agreement. Governor Gordon, Speaker Harshman, Senate President Perkins and JAC Co-Chairs Senator Bebout and Representative Nicholas penned an op-ed on this proposal over the weekend. You can read it in the Feb. 24 Casper-Star Tribune or at trib.com [here](#).

Today on the House floor, we considered bills on Second Reading, Third Reading and General File. A few of the bills we considered today include:

- HB 162, State trust lands-proposals and study. This bill would require the Office of State Lands and Investments to solicit and review proposals for the development of school

and state trust lands in Teton County, and make recommendations. As we continue to face significant education funding shortfalls, I think it is important to look at all potential revenue streams. As a result, I've supported this bill both in the Appropriations Committee and in the House.

- HB 74, Small modular nuclear reactor permitting. This bill would authorize permits of small modular nuclear reactors and replacement of coal generation capacity with small modular nuclear reactor capacity. It would exempt small modular nuclear reactors from public service commission regulations. This bill is aimed at supporting Wyoming's uranium producers and bolstering the use of nuclear energy here in Wyoming. The bill was passed by the Committee of the Whole in the House today.
- HB 159, Monthly payment of ad valorem tax on mineral production. This bill would require monthly payments of ad valorem tax on mineral production starting in 2022. I support moving to monthly payments, but I am concerned about this bill's impact to our local oil and gas companies. I will be sponsoring an amendment to push the timelines out one more year. The bill would allow a 10-year period to make up the double payments. The bill was passed by the Committee of the Whole in the House today and awaits Second and Third readings.

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

Thank you,

Albert Sommers