

3-2-2020

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you from Cheyenne on the sixteenth day of the 2020 Budget Session. As we head into the fourth week of session, the House of Representatives is now considering legislation that has been passed by the Senate. The House and Senate will need to work out any differences in bills as they move between the two chambers. Once an agreement is reached, the legislation will go back to each chamber for an up or down vote. If passed by both chambers, the legislation goes to the Governor for consideration.

A few of the key bills which have already passed the Senate, and which we considered today, include:

- SF 119, State funded capital construction. This bill is co-sponsored by the Joint Appropriations Committee, of which I am a member. This bill includes specific funding for a wide variety of capital construction projects including K-12 schools, community colleges, the University of Wyoming, state facilities including administrative, health and correctional facilities, and many others. I voted to support this bill, because we have some one-time money from our investment earnings that can be utilized for state funded construction projects. We must continue to move this state forward and fund construction when it makes sense. The bill was passed on Second Reading in the House today.
- SF 2, Legislative budget. This bill provides funding for the operation of the legislative branch of state government. Wyoming has the smallest legislative staff in the country; only North Dakota is close. These staff are the attorneys and experts who help lawmakers craft bills and navigate the legislative process. We are understaffed and I support additional funding to ensure we have the people we need to be an effective legislature. The bill has been re-referred to the House Appropriations Committee.

- SF 18, Wildlife conservation efforts. This legislation allows for voluntary donations to support wildlife conservation efforts related to the transportation system. I support this bill, which has passed Committee of the Whole in the House.
- SF 41, Animal damage management funding. This bill increases the request for funding for animal damage management from the Game and Fish Commission and established a voluntary fee for animal damage management funding. I voted in favor of this bill which has passed Committee of the Whole in the House.
- SF0015, Absenteeism and truancy. This bill pertaining to K12 education defined "Willful absenteeism" of students as exceeding the limit of unexcused absences, when the excess absences are the result of a parent's willful failure, neglect or refusal to require a child's regular attendance at school. This bill also increased the penalty to parents who kept their kids from school, and made forced absenteeism part of the child neglect statutes. I could not support this bill, because I worry parents could be forced into becoming criminals by keeping their children out of school to help on the ranch or farm for a few days. The bill did not pass Committee of the Whole.

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

Thank you,

Albert Sommers