

3-20-2020

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you with a delayed update after the twenty-fourth, and final, day of the 2020 Budget Session. We finished about 11 pm on March 12, as we waited for the last of the conference committees on bills, and on any veto overrides from the Senate. As COVID-19 sweeps across our state, nation, and economies, I was remiss in not getting my last report out to you, so here it is.

During the Session's last days, I served on the conference committee for three of its most impactful and controversial bills. Conference committees are appointed by the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate to hammer out differences between the two chambers on a bill. The conference committee on the budget bill consists of five members from each chamber, and all other conference committees for bills consist of three members from each chamber. I served on the conference committee for the Budget Bill ([SF0001](#)), which took hours of negotiations. The Budget passed the Legislature earlier in the week, but only after a tie vote in the Senate was reversed: two Senators changed their no votes to aye votes.

The Governor vetoed several of the Legislature's budget amendments to Senate File 1. The Legislature did not override any vetoes that the Governor placed in Senate File 1. However, the Legislature did override one of the Governor's vetoes in [SF0002](#), the budget for the operations of the Legislature.

I served on the conference committee for [HB0171](#), which was the gaming bill. This bill creates the Wyoming Gaming Commission from the existing Pari-Mutuel Commission, puts a moratorium on skill-based video games that are already in many bars and clubs around the state, outlaws these gaming machines on July 1, 2021, unless the Legislature acts, and requires the newly created Gaming Commission to study gaming issues and provide recommendations. This was one of the most interesting and contentious bills of the Session, and several amendments were proposed to it.

I also served on the conference committee for [SF0138](#), which establishes the sideboards for any attempt to purchase those lands in Southwest Wyoming called the Checkerboards. In the end, the bill requires a vote of a majority of the Legislature to purchase any of this property, an

extensive public process, protection of existing grazing leases, and a provision that any revenues exceeding expenses and repayment of funds will help fund education. I personally think this purchase is a risky proposition, but kicking the tires is not a bad idea.

The House and the Senate continued to negotiate on [SF0119](#), the State Capital Construction bill, which funds state, UW, and community college capital construction projects. However, negotiations failed, causing the bill to fail, when the Senate would not agree to funding any UW capital construction, while agreeing to fully fund all proposed community college projects. We should not pit UW and community colleges against each other.

On Thursday March 19, Governor Gordon held a webinar with all legislators on the COVID-19 outbreak, and on his decision to close certain businesses in Wyoming. These are tough times for the state and the nation. We will have to pull together to survive both the virus and the economic hit we are taking. If needed, the Governor can call a special session of the Legislature to help craft solutions to the issues arising from this disease. I will try to keep abreast of the issues the state is facing. I wish all of you good health and safety.

As always, I can be reached with questions or concerns at [albert@albertsommers.com](mailto:albert@albertsommers.com).

Thank you,

Albert Sommers