

1-30-2021

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you from Cheyenne on January 30, 2021, after the first week of the virtual segment of the 2021 General Session. Each day's session can be viewed on YouTube, and yesterday's session can be viewed by going to the calendar on the legislative website at <https://www.wyoleg.gov/>, and then clicking on a day and the video link for either the House or Senate.

The House passed several bills on Third Reading that I supported, including [HB0048](#), Community Juvenile Services Block Grant Program, which is a bill brought forward as a part of the Governor's recommended budget cuts. This bill simply states that we will fund the community juvenile services block grant program, IF money is available. The Department of Family Services was mandated in statute to fund this program, regardless of whether the state had the money. This doesn't eliminate the program, but does eliminate the mandate to fund it.

Other bills that passed the House in Third Reading that I supported included [HB0013](#), Alcoholic Beverage Regulation, which allows wine club members to buy more bottles of wine through the internet; [HB0042](#), Chancery Court Vacancy Amendments, which pushes out the date for filling vacancies in Wyoming's newly created Chancery court in an effort to save money; [HB0044](#), Omnibus Water Bill – Construction, which utilizes Severance Tax dollars to fund water projects around the state; [HB0066](#), 2021 Large Projects Funding, which utilizes investment income from the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust Fund and some recently appropriated General Fund dollars to help fund wildlife projects around the state, including the Dry Piney mule deer crossings project in Sublette County; and [HJ0001](#), Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Treatments, a resolution requesting that our federal Congressional delegation enact legislation that would allow hyperbaric oxygen treatment or other important therapies and counseling to be utilized for traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder.

The House passed a handful of bills through Second Reading today, including [HB0035](#), Theft Statute – Amendment. This bill seemed like a simple clean up of an error made in recent changes to these statutes. However, it generated a lot of debate between the various attorneys in the House because of the word “knowingly.” A standing committee amendment struck one

instance of the word “knowingly” from a portion of the theft statutes. A debate ensued as to whether the “knowingly” in the governing subsection was sufficient, without adding it a second time. In the end, the body, including me, agreed that the second “knowingly” was superfluous. Even though this seems like a minor point, the great debate in the body by very good attorneys proved the old adage that words matter.

[HB0030](#), Public utility assessment, passed Second Reading. This bill would allow the Public Service Commission (PSC) to increase rates to rate payers to cover the increased costs of hearings that have become increasingly more complex. The PSC regulates the public utilities that provide services to consumers in the state. The three main industries it regulates are electricity, natural gas and telephone. The general duties and functions of the PSC include regulation of monopoly utilities to ensure safe, adequate, and reliable service at just and reasonable rates; certification of utility service territory; resolution of complaints lodged against utilities; electric and natural gas utility securities and financing; authorizing major utility construction projects; utility mergers and reorganizations; and a few other minor duties. This quasi-judicial agency is critical to ensuring rate paying businesses and citizens are not taken advantage of by large monopolies.

By the way, do not worry, HB37 – Road Usage Charge will not gain any traction this legislative session. Many constituents have asked me about this bill. The Joint Transportation Committee brought several bills forward to fund roads and highways in Wyoming, but HB37 has virtually no support.

For details on these and all other 2021 bills, visit <https://www.wyoleg.gov/Legislation/2021>

I can be reached at [albert@albertsommers.com](mailto:albert@albertsommers.com) with questions or comments. Thank you.