

11/4/2021

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you on Thursday, Nov. 4, from Cheyenne and the closing of the Special Session of the Wyoming Legislature. This special session was called to address federal overreach surrounding proposed federal COVID-19 vaccine mandates. The House was in recess from Friday, Oct. 29 through Tuesday, Nov. 2. This recess was called to allow the Senate time to work the two House bills we sent them last week.

The bills that had passed the House were [HB1001](#), COVID-19 vaccine employer mandates and [HB1002](#), Federal COVID vaccine mandates-prohibition and remedies-2.

As it left the House, HB1001 conditionally prohibited employer COVID-19 vaccine mandates on employees, unless employers provided accommodations to employees choosing not to be vaccinated. In the bill, Wyoming law would have yielded to federal law, unless a federal judge issued a stay on the federal mandate. The House chose not to jeopardize federal funding to hospitals and nursing homes by forcing entities to pick whether they want to violate state law or federal law. We wanted to protect employers' rights, employees' rights, and the rights of seniors utilizing hospitals and nursing homes. The House felt like it threaded that needle when HB1001 was sent to the Senate.

First, HB1001 went to the Senate Appropriations Committee on Monday, Nov. 1. The committee heard hours of testimony from citizens, businesses, state agencies, and hospitals regarding the impacts of the bill. The Senate committee passed the bill to the full Senate.

On Wednesday, Nov. 3, in 3rd Reading, the Senate disagreed that an appropriate balance between employers and employees had been reached. HB1001 failed to pass the Senate by one vote. In 3rd Reading, the Senate also heard HB1002. It passed with amendments.

The House did not concur with the Senate changes to HB1002. As a result, both bodies appointed a conference committee to negotiate the differences between the House and the Senate versions. HB1002 was my bill, so I was appointed Chairman of the House conference committee. The conference committee reached agreement after about an hour, and the full

House and Senate voted to accept the compromise. This bill passed the Legislature and is on the Governor's desk awaiting his approval or veto.

HB1002 outlines Wyoming's rights under the US and Wyoming Constitutions. The bill creates a formal resolution stating Wyoming's rights, which will be sent to the US President and Congress. Further, the bill authorizes the Wyoming Attorney General to fight federal vaccine mandates and to join citizen lawsuits that protect our constitutional rights. The bill appropriates \$4 million to the Governor's office to fight federal mandates and protect citizens' rights. The courts are the only way to effectively fight these federal mandates.

Wyoming has started to push back on federal COVID-19 vaccine mandates in the courts, and this Special Session provided the Governor with funds for the fight.

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