

2/3/2021

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you from Cheyenne on February 3, 2021. Today, 9 bills passed 2nd Reading in the House, including [SF0037](#), Omnibus Water Bill - Planning, which utilizes dedicated Severance Tax dollars to fund water planning projects that includes a Hoback River watershed study and a rehabilitation study for the Highland Irrigation District in Sublette County; [SF0060](#), Monthly Ad Valorem Tax Revisions – 2, which attempts to clean up problematic language in a bill from last session that moved mineral ad valorem tax payments to monthly; and [HB0049](#), Agency Fees, increases certain fees in the Department of Health and the Department of Ag. During the interim, the Joint Appropriations Committee was assigned the task of examining fees that various agencies assess for services they provide. The committee narrowed the bill down to just a few areas that needed examination. The committee examined fees in surrounding states to determine where to set new fees. The bill raised licensure fees issued by the Department of Health for hospitals, assisted living facilities, birthing centers, and other health care facilities. This agency has a responsibility to ensure these facilities meet certain standards, and the fees in this area had not been raised for years, and in some cases decades. The bill also raised licensure fees for food establishments, including grocery stores, restaurants, and mobile food trucks. The bill would double the current licensure fees, which is still well below surrounding states. Colorado starts their licensure fees at over \$300/year, and this bill would take Wyoming's restaurant licensing fee to \$200/ year. During the budget markup process, the Department of Ag cut food safety inspectors, because of a lack of funds. We cannot compromise the safety of the consumer. The Department of Ag provides food safety inspectors in counties where the county has not formed its own inspection services. The Department does provide dollars to counties with their own inspection programs to help defray inspection costs and this bill will provide more money back to these county programs. There will be an amendment in 3rd Reading tomorrow to reduce by half the doubling of these food safety fees, and I will support that amendment. These fees have not been raised in over 20 years, but I believe this amendment is appropriate for the economic climate we are currently in. Today, 4 bills passed 3rd Reading in the House, with three bills passing unanimously and one bill having just one no vote. These bills amended tax lien enforcement statutes, provided for out-

of-state bank charter conversions, added more duties to the Wyoming energy authority, and amended timing for distributions from the earnings of the permanent mineral trust fund.

Four bills passed Committee of the Whole in the House, including [SF0026](#), Animal Abuse Statutes Reorganization and Update. This bill did not change existing law, but simply reorganized statutes to make it more user friendly for law enforcement. The reorganization had some unintended consequences coming out of the Agriculture Committee, but the Judiciary Committee cleaned up the bill's language with an amendment. I initially would not have been able to support this bill, but the clean up amendment solved my concerns.

For details on the bills discussed in this press release, and all other 2021 bills, visit <https://www.wyoleg.gov/Legislation/2021>

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Thank you