

3/12/2021

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you from Cheyenne on March 12, 2021. Today, three bills passed 3rd Reading in the House, including [HB0001](#), General government appropriations - 2, which was the supplemental budget bill for the general appropriations of government. This supplemental budget contained about \$450 million in General Fund reductions to state agencies, which is nearly a 16 percent cut. According to a [Bloomberg article](#), Wyoming had the nation's largest drop in state revenues during the pandemic, with nearly a 21 percent reduction.

The Senate and the House start mirror bills for the budget on each side, and work them simultaneously. When the budget bill hits 2nd and 3rd Reading, both bodies can bring amendments. This allows individual legislators to bring needs from their constituents into the budget, or propose deeper budget reductions. This past week, the House debated 42 budget amendments on 2nd Reading and 27 on 3rd Reading.

The House passed four major budget amendments during 2nd and 3rd Reading. There was general concern from the public and in the Legislature that these cuts had too deeply impacted critical programs in the Department of Health and Department of Family Services. These programs serve the most vulnerable people in Wyoming. In response, the House adopted a budget amendment that put about \$19 million from our "Rainy Day" fund back into these programs.

The House also passed an amendment to invest \$10 million from our "Rainy Day" account in carbon capture research and technology, subject to matching dollars from other entities. Carbon capture is being promoted by the federal government, and the Legislature hopes Wyoming can be a leader in this field.

The University of Wyoming and Wyoming's community colleges were subject to very large budget reductions; an amendment passed the House to return a total of about \$14 million to these institutions. The most interesting budget amendment to pass the House appropriated \$4 million to the University of Wyoming to be expended on operating and maintaining blockchain technologies to support cryptocurrency.

Each of these amendments passing the House today support the most vulnerable citizens of Wyoming, new and legacy industries to make Wyoming competitive into the future, and post-secondary education in Wyoming. I supported these amendments.

Now that the House and the Senate have each debated and amended their separate budgets, members of a conference committee will be appointed from each body to work out their differences. Even though both sides start with identical budget bills, the two bodies amend those bills into very different budgets. This conference committee will have five legislators from each body, and their debates will be long and difficult.

You can find more details about all the 2021 bills here: <https://wyoleg.gov/Legislation/2021>

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Thank You