

2/18/2022

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you from Cheyenne on February 18. As we wrapped up the first week of the session, we voted on more bill introductions, debated bills in Committee of the Whole, heard bills on 2nd Reading, and had the final vote on bills in 3rd Reading.

Regarding the 20 bills voted on for introduction, I would like to report on a few. The intent of [HB0139](#) - protecting Wyoming's land and water resources, was to push back against Biden's 30-30 conservation plan. I understand and support the frustration with the current Administration's land policies, but this bill would have hampered the State's ability to support conservation easement projects. Conservation easements preserve agriculture and wildlife in Wyoming. Conservation easements have preserved old family ranches in the Green River Valley, and without them more of our state would be owned by out-of-state billionaires. I voted against the bill, and it failed introduction.

I voted in favor of [HB0149](#) - human life equality - prohibiting discriminatory abortions, and it passed introduction. This bill would prohibit abortion based on a diagnosis and other selective reasons, including fetal disabilities, sex, race, color, ancestry, and national origin.

One of my bills, [HB0072](#) - hunting license application funds, was also discussed today. With the increasing need for wildlife habitat, wildlife crossing projects, and access concerns, there is also a need to finance these efforts. This bill would give unsuccessful hunter applicants the option to donate a portion of their refunded fees to this effort. The bill passed introduction.

[HB0142](#) - vacancies in elected office, would call for special elections to be held to fill an office in the circumstance of a vacancy. Although this bill failed introduction, I voted in favor of it. I feel that there should be no ambiguity about how to proceed when someone leaves office before the end of their term. I believe a special election is the appropriate way to fill an elected official vacancy, because it takes the vacancy directly to a vote of the people.

[HB0091](#) - county officers - salaries, would amend the process of setting pay levels for various county elected officials. This bill sets the salary for these officers to be no less than \$10,000, yet

no more than the salary of a district court judge. I believe this is a local control issue and that we should let locally elected county commissioners decide salaries, because counties pay the bill. The cost of living in the county should be taken into account when considering salary. I voted for this bill, and it passed introduction.

Some members of the House decided to try and pull a handful of bills out of the Speaker's desk today, because it was the last day for bill introductions. Fundamentally, I believe it is the Speaker's job to balance the time available against the workload of the session. I don't support members trying to control that process. Specifically, in this first week, we had complicated issues that needed to be tackled, including the debate over a House member's qualifications for office, and the redistricting bill. For these reasons, I voted against all five motions to pull a bill out of the Speaker's desk, regardless of the merits of the bill. All five bills failed introduction.

We heard six bills on 3rd Reading today. I voted in favor of [HB0004](#) - water permits – livestock on federal land, which provides that any permit issued for the purposes of watering livestock on an allotment shall only be issued in the name of a federal agency, if it is jointly held by a person or grazing association who has the right to use a grazing permit. This bill passed unanimously.

[HB0100](#) - Redistricting of the legislature, was discussed in 3rd Reading today. Further amendments were debated, but none affected Sublette County. As explained in my earlier releases, after 3rd Reading, House District 20 will include all of Sublette County and the greater LaBarge area.

I can be reached at [albert@albertsommers.com](mailto:albert@albertsommers.com) for questions or concerns.