

2/23/22

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you from Cheyenne on February 23. Today, we heard bills on 2nd Reading and had the final vote on one bill in 3rd Reading.

We spent a large portion of today on 2nd Reading of the Budget Bill, [HB0001](#), voting on amendments to the budget. This is the opportunity for all legislators to bring priorities from their communities and constituents into the budget. There were a few interesting amendments that sparked a lot of debate and are worth discussing.

One of the few that passed was Amendment [HB0001H2012](#). This amendment would provide funding for safe routes for schools, sidewalks, crosswalks, along with providing trails for biking, hiking and horse riding. Investing in projects such as these will be beneficial as it encourages people to get out and enjoy the beauty of Wyoming. Additionally, these projects will last for generations. Most importantly, it will ensure that kids are able to get to and from school safely. This proves to be relevant after recent incidents earlier this year in which a student was fatally hit in a school zone, followed by two other students who were struck within the same week in Cheyenne.

Amendments that did not pass but are still relevant and impactful to Wyoming are amendments [HB0001H2016](#) and [HB0001H2041](#). These amendments would have increased the salary of Wyoming State Troopers and state snowplow drivers. These highway department employees are underpaid, and we are losing many of them to better paying municipalities, counties and states. These amendments failed, but [HB0001H2044](#) passed the House, with my support. This amendment gives all state employees an additional 1.7 percent salary increase from the 5 percent increase suggested by the Joint Appropriations Committee. We have a shortage of snowplow drivers, state troopers, and other critical state employees. We need to increase these salaries, or risk losing good people.

The House did not pass [HB0001H2032](#), which would have given a salary increase to K12 school personnel. I supported this amendment. Wyoming is losing good teachers, and it is becoming extremely difficult to recruit new teachers. Regarding teacher pay, Wyoming has lost its competitive advantage with surrounding states. I believe it was a terrible message to send to

our K12 educators to increase the pay of all state workers, including higher education, and not support Wyoming K12 teachers. I will likely bring a one-time bonus amendment on 3rd Reading for Wyoming's teachers, and non-certified staff such as custodians.

Another interesting amendment that may encourage rodeo kids in Sublette County to participate in college rodeo is [HB0001H2051](#). This amendment passed 2nd Reading, with my support. This amendment would provide \$200,000 to support competitive college rodeo teams at Wyoming community colleges. Rodeo is a staple of our culture and western heritage. Those who compete in rodeo know first-hand the expense associated with the sport and may see some relief if this amendment remains intact.

I can be reached at albert@albertsommers.com with questions and comments.