

2/25/22

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you from Cheyenne on February 25. Today, we heard bills on 2nd Reading and voted on bills in 3rd Reading. The majority of the day was spent debating 3rd Reading budget amendments to [HB0001](#) - General government appropriations-2.

Interesting bills discussed in Committee of the Whole included [HB0136](#) - underground water contested case hearings. This bill requires that in contested hearings, the petitioner in the case has the burden of proof in their claim to the water. This bill passed Committee of the Whole, with my support.

A highly debated and controversial bill that passed Committee of the Whole today is [HB0085](#) - child endangering - controlled substance use while pregnant. This bill holds that any pregnant mother who knowingly consumes methamphetamine or any other narcotic drug will be charged with a felony for child endangerment. Many worried that this will not limit drug consumption by these women, but will have the unintended consequence of women choosing not to receive prenatal and other medical care for fear of going to jail. This bill passed Committee of the Whole.

In the last couple of days, two of my bills, [HB0015](#) - Political subdivision club liquor licenses, and [HB0072](#) - Hunting license application funds, passed Committee of the Whole with little opposition.

During 2nd and 3rd Readings of the Budget Bill on Wednesday and Friday, the House debated 103 proposed amendments to the budget. I passed one 3rd Reading budget amendment and one 2nd Reading amendment. During 2nd Reading on Wednesday, I passed [HB0001H2028](#), an amendment providing the University of Wyoming (UW) with more flexibility in how it spends matching dollars in the Ranch and Rangeland Management program. I worked with the Joint Appropriations Committee to appropriate \$2.5 million, which will be matched by the University, in support of excellence in research, education and extension in ranch and rangeland management.

During 3rd Reading of the budget on Friday, I passed [HB0001H3027](#), an amendment that appropriates \$400,000 for purposes of funding up to 50 percent of the costs of any at-will contract positions within the state forestry division hired to conduct good neighbor authority projects, or other federally funded cooperative forest management projects funded through the Wyoming state forestry good neighbor authority program. This amendment was a priority for Sublette County, as its forest collaborative seeks to establish forest management projects in the Bridger-Teton Forest.

During 3rd Reading, I failed to pass [HB0001H3026](#), which would have given K12 teachers a one-time 3 percent salary bonus. The original HB1 had a 5 percent salary increase for state workers, including UW and community college employees. The House passed an amendment on 2nd Reading, [HB0001H2044](#), that increased the salaries of these state workers another 1.7 percent. However, members of the House repeatedly rejected all efforts to raise the salary of K12 teachers, because they felt an infusion of federal money would allow for districts to provide bonuses to teachers. If we are going to give all state employees salary increases, then we should have supported teachers with a small salary increase, or a one-time bonus.

Several 3rd Reading amendments were defeated for procedural reasons. They were attempting to legislate in the budget bill, which in essence violates the Constitution. The Wyoming Constitution, Article 3 Section 20 states, "No law shall be passed except by bill, and no bill shall be so altered or amended on its passage through either house as to change its original purpose." Article 3 Section 34 states that general appropriation bills shall embrace nothing but appropriations for the ordinary expenses of government. The Budget Bill passed on 3rd Reading with my support.

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