

Hello Sublette County and LaBarge, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you on January 30, the start of the fourth week of the General Session of the 67th Legislature. A lot is happening this week. We will hear and work on the budget bill throughout the week, and tomorrow – Tuesday, January 31 – is the last day for House Bills to be introduced.

[HB0066](#) failed today on 3rd Reading. In its original form, this bill would have prohibited businesses, medical facilities, and schools from requiring face masks and vaccinations. However, this bill runs counter to the position the State of Wyoming has already taken on this issue. In 2021, Wyoming joined 11 other states in a lawsuit against the federal government to protect the rights of businesses to maintain control over how they operate their businesses. We won that portion of the lawsuit, and I do not support changing directions and taking this right away from businesses as this bill would have done. During the same timeframe, Wyoming also joined 24 states to reject the CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) vaccine mandate for healthcare workers. The Supreme Court eventually upheld CMS's authority to require COVID-19 vaccinations to beneficiaries of federal Medicare and Medicaid dollars. The decision requires health care providers receiving federal health care dollars in Wyoming to ensure their staff have been vaccinated. In order to continue to remain in compliance with these CMS requirements and continue to receive the federal health care funding, workers at medical facilities must follow CMS rules. Hospitals, nursing homes and the State cannot afford that cost which is at least \$800 million a year. I believe the courts have already settled both of the underlying topics of this bill, and for this reason, I voted no on HB66.

[HB0083 - Tribal agreements to hunt and fish](#) passed the House on 3rd Reading today. This bill authorizes the Governor to negotiate and enter into agreements with the tribes concerning hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering rights claims in the State. The bill was drafted in response to the 2019 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Herrera v. Wyoming*, which determined that Tribal hunting rights outlined in federal treaties were not extinguished when Wyoming became a state. This is an important bill and I supported it.

Today we also heard [HB001](#), the budget bill, in Committee of the Whole. Members of the House Appropriations Committee took turns walking House members through different sections of the budget, including operating expenses for all executive, legislative and judicial branch agencies, including the University of Wyoming, community colleges, and K-12 education. Throughout the week, Representatives will have the opportunity to debate the budget and offer amendments. A mirror process is taking place in the Senate. Look for more specifics on the budget in my updates throughout the week.

I can be reached at [albert@albertsommers.com](mailto:albert@albertsommers.com) with questions or comments. Thank you.