

2019 Wyoming League of Women Voters Legislative Report #6

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Anyone with a stake in the supplemental budget (for the second half of Wyoming's biennium) is watching with concern a renewed rivalry between the House and Senate. (A WyoFile story provides a good summary of the dispute of philosophy and personality [here](#).)

The House version, HB1, and the Senate version, SF1, are ready to come together in a conference committee this week and next. But they are about \$70 million apart, and the Senate signaled its rejection of HB1 by suspending the rules and adopting four new budget bills that are likely to stay and die in the Senate, as a grand gesture. To further express distress over the spending ways of the House, the Senate killed SF162 – State fund capital construction.

So expect a contentious conference committee, composed of the five Senate Appropriations members led by Chairman Eli Bebout and five of the nine House Appropriations members. There will be a strong incentive to reach a compromise in the first conference committee, constrained to defend amendments passed by the House and Senate. A second conference committee would be “free” and able to write original amendments.

House Speaker Harshman has exhorted representatives to “trust the process.” However, the 2019 Wyoming legislative session is notable for parliamentary moves to circumvent the process: so-called “zombie” bills, undoing and redoing committee votes, reconsidering and rescinding votes, clear conflict of interest.

LWV Wyoming is a major supporter of HB145 – Death Penalty Repeal, which passed the House 36-21-3 and will be heard in Senate Judiciary on Wednesday. It has diverse supporters, based on both practical and principle. **Death row exoneree Gary Drinkard will be in Cheyenne next week to lobby senators for the bill and will speak at a reception 6 p.m. Feb. 12 (Tuesday) at Highlands Presbyterian Church in Cheyenne, 2390 Pattison Ave. Please come if you can.**

A voter ID bill (HB192) died narrowly 29-30 in the House, but other bills to restrict ability to change party affiliation during the Primary survive. A House version (HB106) has been amended to limit the block-out period to 14 days **before** the election and to exempt unaffiliated voters. The Senate version (SF160) stops affiliation change 14 days before absentee ballots are mailed out (40-45 days before election), at the request of a state party chairman. Recall that Primary Elections are public and publicly funded. SF160 passed the Senate 20-10 and awaits House action. HB106 passed the House 41-18 and awaits Senate action. LWV opposes both these bills.

LWV Wyoming vigorously opposed SJ4 calling for an Article V convention of states, which passed Senate Corporations but died in its first Senate debate 10-20. Thanks to all who contacted senators to kill this very dangerous proposition.

LWV Wyoming vigorously supported HB244 to expand Medicaid, which passed House Labor and then died in Committee of the Whole 23-36-1. Almost immediately, talk and pledges of funding have resumed about a ballot initiative to expand Medicaid in Wyoming. Meanwhile, SF146 to fund a \$280,000

study of Medicaid expansion by the Wyoming Department of Insurance is making its way unmolested through the session, despite a December 2018 study by the Wyoming Department of Health that covers the same items as the proposed for the Insurance Department. It is sponsored by Sen. Charlie Scott, a persistent critic of Medicaid expansion.

Sen. Lynn Hutchings (R-Cheyenne) is accused of making offensive comments to high school students whose school is in her district and who were lobbying for LGBTQ employment protections. Her reported comments (which she denies) implied the teens approved of bestiality and pedophilia. (For details, read Wyoming Equality's complaint to legislative leaders posted on their Website.) Recall the Management Council rejected a decorum rule to limit verbal abuse based on gender identity. Perhaps Management Council should revisit that rule.

The Legislature will take a President's Day recess on Feb. 18, and then the next big deadline is Feb. 20 for bills to be reported out of committee in the second House. The next day is the deadline for General File. Adjournment is scheduled for Feb. 27.

Go to the Legislative Service Office Website www.wyoleg.gov to read all the bills and their status, about the legislators and leadership and the calendars for committees and floor action. All floor debate is streamed and archived. Appropriations meetings are streamed and recorded, as well. Audio links are on wyoleg.gov. The Legislature will return to the State Capitol for the 2020 session.

The Management Council has scheduled 35 days for the 2019 session. Monday is day number 24. The first big deadline is Feb. 1 for bills to be out of the house of origin. The next day it must clear General File (initial debate). Majority floor leaders set the debate schedules. Adjournment is Feb. 27.

Find info on how to contact legislators by clicking on the "Citizen Engagement" tab at the top of the home page of wyoleg.gov. Then click on "Contacting a Legislator." Lots of information on that tab about attending a session. Of course, a personal visit is the most effective, if you can make it. Remember to read the "engrossed" version of bills as they move from one house to the other.

Please contact me if you have questions about bills, meetings or issues navigating wyoleg.gov.