

2019 Wyoming League of Women Voters Legislative Report #8

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The 2019 Wyoming legislative session ends this week, with the supplemental budget settled and committee meetings turning to discussions about interim studies. Some bills are still up in the air, but it looks as if the House and Senate have avoided a house-on-house train wreck on the budget bill.

SF144 – Medicaid and SNAP eligibility requirements sailed through the Senate but faces critical votes this week in the House. It is promoted by the right-wing advocacy group and Florida-based Foundation for Government Accountability, and supporters describe it as a kind of “tough love” to get very low-income Medicaid recipients to work or volunteer or go to school to stiffen their character. However, experiences in Arkansas and elsewhere indicate the work reporting measures only serve to trip people up and deny them primary and preventing care and medications for 6 months or longer. Most adults on Medicaid have children on Medicaid, and most are working already.

Please email or call your members in the House to urge them to vote “no” on SF144. Notes on SF144 are at the end of this legislative report.

Thanks to all who contacted senators to kill the nefarious HB106 – Party Affiliation Changes. This voter suppression bill emerged from Senate Agriculture 4-1 and then failed its first vote in the Senate. 11-14-5. Curiously, the roll call vote is not posted on the Legislative Service Office Website. It was touted throughout the session as the Number One priority of the state GOP central committee, to stop Wyoming voters from participating in “their” Primary. I testified that if they wanted to close their nomination process, the solution was a caucus by the GOP—rather than a publicly-funded and publicly-conducted Primary Election. When the roll call vote is posted, please thank senators who voted “no.”

The supplemental budget bill, HB1, includes \$18 million in an “external cost adjustment” for K-12 public schools, which just meets the constitutional mandate (avoiding talk of possible litigation by school districts), and it includes \$17.4 million for the University of Wyoming. A compromise version of the bill won approval in the House and Senate, and it is on the governor’s desk.

Two major revenue-raising measures remain in the final week, although one will require a resuscitation. Deus-ex-machina revivals have been a theme of the 2019 session. Bills are reconsidered, votes are rescinded and rules are suspended with routine regularity. HB66 – Lodging Tax is ready for third reading in the Senate, expected to raise nearly \$20 million for tourism. The other measure is HB22, names somewhat euphemistically “National Retail Fairness Act” but known better by the more vernacular “corporate income tax.” It would impose a 7 percent tax on profits for some restaurants and some retail and hospitality businesses in Wyoming that the businesses could deduct from tax payments in other states. The revenue – about \$45 million a year -- would go toward public education. It currently resides in the drawer of the Senate Corporations Committee but could be called out onto the Senate floor by a 2/3 vote of the senators.

The senate decisively voted 3-27 to kill Speaker Steve Harshman’s proposed constitutional amendment to provide for two equal budget and general sessions and to eliminate the 2/3 introduction vote for non-budget bills in a budget session. In fact, only one of the proposed constitutional amendments from the

2019 session looks to be on the 2020 ballot – HJ2 to amend the Wyoming Constitution to remove the specific limit on the amount of debt a municipality can incur for a sewer project.

SF161 – Management Council membership-2 is ready for second and third reading approval in the House this week, removing the requirement that one of the non-leadership seats be filled by the minority party.

The House suspended its rules and delayed second and third readings of bills from Friday to this week. Wednesday at 2 p.m. is the deadline for Joint Conference Committee Reports. Adjournment is scheduled for midnight on Wednesday.

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.

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.” Remember to read the most recent versions of bills as they move through the process.

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

Notes on SF144 – Medicaid and SNAP eligibility requirements

SF144 targets the most economically vulnerable people in Wyoming with new and unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles that would result in loss of Medicaid health coverage for 6 months. The sanction targets adults of small children who receive Medicaid benefits.

People who are in treatment for cancer, people who are in recovery and people who rely on medications to manage chronic and mental illnesses could lose their health coverage because they failed to fill out a new reporting requirement on time.

It is founded on an incorrect assumption – that so-called “able-bodied” people are not working because they lack motivation – that they need the threat of losing health care to get moving.

Most Medicaid recipients already are working for low wages in unstable jobs with volatile and unpredictable hours and limited leave options.

Most Medicaid enrollees lack access to other affordable health insurance, which means losing primary and preventive care, including medications, and likely reliance on hospital emergency departments.

SF144 is not supported by research, data or input from experts on Medicaid benefits or Medicaid recipients.

Here is a column by Dawn Scott of the American Cancer Society- Cancer Action Network in Wyoming: trib.com/news/state-and-regional/govt-and-politics/opinion/scott-medicaid-work-requirements-are-potentially-deadly-for-thousands-of/article_bf963d3d-e693-53d4-9ea9-ae738e3f4602.html /

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