

League of Women Voters of Wyoming 2020 Wyoming Legislature Reports
 #6 – Final Bill Summary March 13, 2020
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LSO Website wyoleg.org

Here is a list of bills of interest to LWVWY. Go to wyoleg.gov, browse 2020 Bills, to see all bills written for the session, their votes and amendments and final disposition.

HEA is House Enrolled Act: the final version of the bill.

Elections

HB26 – Tribal ID for voting
 Establishes tribal ID requirements to be used to register to vote. HEA 63

HB209 – Change in party affiliation (Rep. Blackburn, R-Cheyenne)
 This would have set up a 14-day period before a Primary Election during which people could not switch party affiliations.

SF20 – Election Code amendments
 Among provisions: people may receive absentee ballots by email, no one needs to show an ID at the polls who has produced the ID to register to vote, and ballots must be prepared 45 days before an election (rather than 40) to allow remote voters to get them back to the county clerk in time. SEA 36

SF56 – Absentee polling places
 Clerks may set up a “satellite” polling place (besides courthouse) for early voting. SEA 37

Education

HB40 – School Finance Model recalibration
 Sets up a legislative task force (6 senators, 6 reps) to use consultants’ work and update school funding model. Management Council already has hired a consultant to do the recalibration piece. HEA 96

HB46 – Special education funding
 Would have restored special education funding to full reimbursement, without an artificial cap. House passed, but Senate killed (confusing arguments offered by opponents). Current cap expires July 1, anyway. Districts fear lawsuits if they don’t meet special education needs.

SF15 – Absenteeism and truancy
 House Education eased up some of the punitive elements, then House killed after initial debate. Probably going to be an interim topic for Joint Education.

SF118 – School Finance Amendments (Joint Appropriations)

Attempted to change the resource block grants to schools to cut an expected \$2.9 million for transportation and restrict health insurance payments to cut \$5.2 million this in FY21 and \$16 million in FY23. Education groups wanted to look at those elements as a part of recalibration. However, these cuts survive in the budget bill.

Revenue Reduction

SF85 – Uranium taxation rates (Sen. Boner, R-Douglas)

Sets “conditional severance tax” rate, tied to spot market uranium prices. Predicted price is less than \$30/pound 2021-2023, putting the severance tax of 0 percent, costing the state about \$56,000 next year and \$112,000 annually thereafter. Died on the desk of House Revenue.

House Bill 91- Economic diversification incentives for mineral exploration (Rep. Miller, R-Riverton)

Would have provided a severance tax credit for exploration of minerals not currently being produced in the county. Died on Senate General File.

HB231 – Coal severance tax exemption-Canadian and Mexican ports (HEA 88)

Reduces severance taxes on coal exported through ports in Canada and Mexico, although it was not demonstrated how subsidizing coal exports would make those exports more attractive. The Senate added a provision to sunset the cut if exports reach 10 million tons a year.

HB243 – Oil and gas new production (HEA 97)

Another attempt to boost profitability of drilling oil and gas wells, with a tax break of 2 percent of the total 6 percent severance tax rate for the first six months of 2020 and 1 percent for the next six months. The House heavily amended the bill, lowering the price that would qualify for the rate cut. It also added a tax on new production that sold for high prices and sent a large proportion of that revenue to schools.

SF85 – Uranium taxation rates (SEA 57)

This allows the uranium industry to pay no severance taxes, although House amendments move up the sunset date from 2031 to 2026 and to disallow the tax break to companies that are delinquent on ad valorem mineral production taxes.

Revenue Increase

HB47 – Local Sales and Use Tax (HEA 70)

Would make it easier for a county to put 5th penny tax on the ballot (requiring half of governing bodies, down from 2/3). When renewing, county can ask voters if they want it make it permanent.

HB134 – Wyoming tourism account funding (HEA 7)

Imposes a 5 percent statewide lodging tax, with 3 percent of the revenue going into a newly created Tourism Account and 2 percent returned to counties. LSO estimates it would raise about \$15.5 million a year.

HB63 – Fuel Tax (Joint Revenue)

Would have increased fuel tax from 24 cents to 27 cents per gallon. Failed introduction 30-30.

HB240 and SF6 – Tolling authority for I-80 (Rep. MacGuire and Sen. Von Flatern)

Both failed introduction.

Government**HB4 – Wyoming coal marketing program (HEA 24)**

Sets up a \$1 million coal marketing program in the governor's office. Remarkably little amended.

HB31 – Criminal Justice-Mental health-substance abuse program. (HEA 62)

Requires Departments of Health and Corrections to collaborate to reduce criminal offender recidivism by improving mental health and substance use programming and funding. The House cut the funding in half, to \$324,380, and said the DOC could not include the program in its standard budget in the future. DOC reports progress to Joint Labor, not Appropriations.

HB62 – Senior Health Care Special District (HEA 21)

Creates special districts, with taxing and bonding authority, to set up senior health care facilities.

HB118 – Second Amendment Preservation Act (Rep. Jennings, R-Sheridan)

Tabled, reanimated and very much amended. Would have required state attorney general to fight laws that restrict gun rights. Killed on third reading in Senate 15-14-1.

SF69 – Rural health care district authority (SEA 29)

Creates authority to own and operate a nursing home.

HB97 – Omnibus water bill-construction (HEA 93)

Uses about \$95 million from various water development accounts to plan, design and build water development projects in Wyoming.

HB227 – Per diem rates (Rep. Greear, R-Worland)

Would have increased per diem rates for legislators from \$109 to \$151, which then will be adjusted every July 1 by the state auditor to an amount equal to the most recent standards per diem rate established by the U.S. General Services Administration for travel in Wyoming. Killed Senate third reading 11-17-2.

SF70 – Government abuse, fraud and waste reporting (Sen. James, R-Rock Springs)

Would have set up a reporting system in the state auditor's office for the public to report government abuse, fraud and waste.

HB127 – Prohibition of female genital mutilation (HEA 77)

Makes female genital mutilation a crime in Wyoming. In initial debate, Senate removed language on page 7 that proposed to regulate sex reassignment surgery and body piercing.

SF104 – Management council membership (Sen. Hicks, R-Baggs)

The bill would reduce to one the number of seats reserved for minority party members, when minority party members constitute less than 30 percent of the house of which the chairman is not a member. Died in House Appropriations 5-4.

The Great Land Deal

SF138 – Investment of state funds-2 (SEA 69)

Senate version of this proposal authorizes State Loan and Investment Board to analyze potential purchase of millions of acres from Occidental Petroleum. Leaders say the state will control the destiny of the lands and its prudent management will support education and state government.

Tobacco/E-cigarettes

SF50 – Nicotine products-lawful age and penalties (SEA 53)

This bill reflects federal law to raise the age for buying nicotine products to 21. The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network points out problems: it doesn't cover all tobacco products and exempts non-nicotine e-cigarettes from tobacco control laws. Many changes on penalties and exemptions. Favored by tobacco lobby

HB73 – Nicotine products – taxation (HEA 32)

Adds e-cigarettes to the nicotine taxation system for the state. At the request of e-cigarette lobbyists, the House cut the proposed wholesale tax rate from 15 percent to 7.5 percent – with the belief some people use e-cigarettes to quit smoking. Senate Revenue further accepted e-cigarette amendment to tax e-cigarette fluid by milliliter, ignoring state health officials' warning that it will encourage greater nicotine concentration.

Constitutional Amendments

HJ1 – State Land-mineral royalties (Rep. Hallinan, R-Gillette)

Would have amended the Constitution so the Legislature could divert 2/3 of mineral income of school trust lands from the Permanent Land Fund to a spending account. House approved by necessary 2/3 vote (41-19) and sent to Senate, where it died in the desk of Senate Education.

HJ4 – Legislative sessions (Rep. Harshman, R-Casper)

Would have amended the Constitution remove the different requirements of the Legislature in odd and even years, including removal of the 2/3 introduction vote. Approved by House 43-17, sent to Senate, where it died in the desk of Senate Education.