

League of Women Voters of Wyoming
2020 Wyoming Legislature Reports
#1 – Preview Feb. 7, 2020
By LWV WY Lobbyist Marguerite Herman
Marguerite.herman@gmail.com, 307-630-8095
LSO Website wyoleg.org

The 2020 Wyoming Legislature convenes Feb. 10 for what is scheduled for a 24-day budget session over five weeks without a holiday, using four days “saved” from 2019 and adjourning on March 12. The focus is on a \$3.1 billion budget to fund state government for fiscal 2021 and 2020 and on a very few revenue-raising measures that some legislators hope will ease Wyoming’s dependence on energy and minerals.

Gov. Mark Gordon presented with his version of the budget in December, and the Joint Appropriations Committee has worked the bill and will present its own legislative version by Monday, to give other lawmakers more time to review it. Watch for the appearance of HB1 and SF1 on the bill page of the Legislative Service Office Website.

Budget sessions are intended to focus on budgets, revenue and urgent legislation that couldn’t wait, so non-budget measures require a 2/3 vote for introduction. In the past, the Legislature (especially the House) has consumed the entire first week of the session on introduction votes, which created a traffic jam in committees and floor debate. Once again we have several non-urgent bills from personal agendas already filed for the 2020 session. We’ll see how lawmakers keep on task. Some might wonder if HB55, to establish a fishing taskforce, cannot wait.

Legislative leaders are talking about trying something new to get committee bills introduced quickly – a consent list – but that’s likely to get resistance among legislators.

The Legislature built a “rainy day” savings account (Legislative Stabilization Reserve Account) when times were flush, which Gordon has proposed tapping to cover school funding (\$161 million) and local governments (\$105 million), leaving a balance of \$1.3 billion. But the urgency of stabilizing Wyoming’s economy with other than mineral revenue must be evident, even to the most optimistic. There are several revenue-raising bills, with that in mind.

I will send out legislative reports each week, summarizing the previous week and looking ahead at key issues. I will accompany each report – including this one – with a list of bills of interest to LWV and their status.

Two major bills for LWV Wyoming in 2020 are the death penalty repeal (DPR) and Medicaid expansion. The DPR bill doesn’t have a number yet. The other is HB75 – Medicaid Expansion-Authorization, an Interim Revenue Committee bill that authorizes the governor to take latest research by the departments of Insurance and Health and negotiate an expansion program with CMS. Find a comprehensive Wyoming Department of Health analysis of proposed Medicaid expansion at <https://health.wyo.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/WDH-WY-2019-Medicaid-Expansion-Estimates.pdf>.

LWV strongly supports both, but the DPR bill by Rep. Jared Olsen, R-Cheyenne, needs League members to ask their House members to vote for introduction. HB75, being a committee bill, should at least get a hearing in House Revenue.

Your message to legislators: The League of Women Voters of Wyoming strongly support these two measures and ask them to vote for these bills during introduction, in committee and in debate on the floor.

HB?? – Death Penalty Repeal - The national and state LWV opposes the death penalty, as a practice that consumes millions of dollars year, is subject to errors and failures of equal justice and fails to deter crime. We already have a penalty for grievous crimes: death in prison. This bill doesn't have a number yet, but it's coming.

HB75 – Medicaid Expansion-Authorization – It's time Wyoming took the next step and start talking to CMS about using the millions of Medicaid dollars available to us to extend health coverage to low-income adults. The Department of Health estimates Wyoming could spend about \$9 million a year to bring 10 times that amount to provide medical services and prescriptions to adults who earn less than \$14,000 a year. Wyoming benefits from a stabilized health care system, a healthy workforce and avoiding uncompensated care that helps drive up health care and insurance costs for all.

The accompanying list of bills of interest will grow through the first week of the session, as bill filing is complete and introductions succeed. Some bills of note include:

SF20 – Election Code Amendments

HB26 – Tribal ID for voting

HB40 – School finance-Model recalibration (Joint Education)

HB63 – Fuel Tax (from 24 cents to 27 cents per gallon)

HB64 – National Corporate Tax Recapture

SF6 – Tolling authority for I-80

HB22 – Town and county development regulation (restricts local requirements for affordable housing)

HB83 – UW Board of trustees – selection by electorate

HB86 – Removal of elected municipal officials

HB108 – Ban on sanctuary cities and counties

SF49 – Per diem rates (raises from \$109 to \$151 per day)

SF80 – Handgun purchase (3-day waiting period)

As you follow the 2020 session, find daily action bill-by-bill or house-by-house on the LSO Website wyoleg.org. You can find daily floor calendars and committee meetings on the Website, as well as contact information for legislators and action from past sessions. Also, look at the session schedule and mark your personal calendars with all the deadlines. If you want help navigating the Website, contact me.

We are in the restored Capitol Building and in meeting rooms in the expanded “connector” between the Capitol and Herschler Office Building. We all will be re-orienting ourselves the first week or so.

I am attaching a 4-page brief guide to the legislative process. Please share.

(end 2020 preview)