

League of Women Voters of Wyoming
2020 Wyoming Legislature Reports
#2 – Week 2, Feb. 17, 2020
By LWV WY Lobbyist Marguerite Herman
Marguerite.herman@gmail.com, 307-630-8095
LSO Website wyoleg.org

Going into week #2 of the 2020 Wyoming Legislature, two of LWVWY's major initiatives apparently have run out of options for this year. Expanding Medicaid to low-income adults failed introduction as an interim House Revenue Committee bill (HB75) and then as a proposed constitutional amendment (HJR7). Death penalty repeal (HB166) failed by 3 votes, after a handful of legislators flipped at the last minute and voted against introduction.

A headline in the Casper Star-Tribune said Medicaid supporters had no "plan B," but the Healthy Wyoming group certainly has not given up the effort to bring Medicaid dollars to Wyoming to cover health care needs for adults, stabilize our health care industry and stimulate our economy. There is plenty to do in the interim for both Medicaid expansion and the death penalty repeal.

Meanwhile, LWV will be lobbying elections-related bills to support access to the polls by qualified electors – good ones that include the Tribal ID as a voter registration ID (HB26) and bad ones that restrict party affiliation changes in early Primary Election voting (HB209). And in the interest of public access to their government, LWV will oppose HB222 – Public meetings, which would excuse the State Loan and Investment Board from observing open meetings laws when it met to get information and training. Training that informs decision making should be noticed to the public.

The Legislature killed several revenue-generating proposals and advanced other measures designed to boost our mineral industry, at the expense of our state treasury. (See the attached Bill Summary.) Meanwhile, legislators are talking about making public education share in the budget misery. That is accomplished by limiting expenses for special education and transportation and "modernizing" (i.e., "cutting") the so-called basket of goods and services that has to be funded, during the 2020 recalibration of the funding formula. No proposed constitutional changes this session, though.

A bill to raise salaries of the top five elected officials failed, as did one of the legislative per diem bills, but a second per diem bill (HB227) survives in House Minerals. HB118-Second Amendment Preservation Act -- one of those "model legislation" bills promoted by special interest groups and carried home by a Wyoming lawmaker – was sent to House Judiciary needing so much work. The committee voted to indefinitely postpone it.

Lawmakers filed 398 bills and resolutions for 2020. After the first major deadline of introductions, 76 failed or were withdrawn by the sponsor (check "inactive" bills on the LSO's list of 2020 bills). House leadership tried to make sure introduction speeches didn't grind the whole legislative process to a halt, with consent lists and work on bills during the week. One possible response comes from House Speaker Steve Harshman, to make the even- and odd-year sessions the same, and remove the 2/3 vote introduction process in budget sessions, as an unreasonable obstacle to serving constituents. (HJ4)

The House and Senate Appropriations committees begin two days of reviewing the \$3.1 billion biennial budget approved by the Joint Appropriations committee, appearing on the General File Monday and Tuesday calendar as HB1 and SF1. If you have time, it's very helpful to listen to the presentation (including member questions). The LSO's Home Page has a link for floor debate live and archived audio. You also can find the audio stream link on House and Senate calendars. Budget amendments will be debated on second and third reading. The LSO has a neat feature this year, so the budget amendments will link directly to the applicable budget section.

See the attached #2 bill summary for 2020 measures of interest to LWV. The list is not exhaustive, so please browse the list for proposals of interest for yourself and League.

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. The LSO is updating the status of bills on the daily debate schedule, which is a big help. Also, look at the session schedule and mark your personal calendars with all the deadlines. If you want help navigating the Website, contact me.

A word about the wonderfully restored Wyoming State Capitol. It is undeniably wonderful, and every League member will appreciate the public access to committee meetings. We appreciate the beautiful historic restoration and the planning that serves the public with ample elevators and bathrooms (not a small thing, compared to the previous situation.) Clearly, the state is still working on finishing touches (clocks in meeting rooms, signage, furniture, etc.). Some aspects might require rethinking, as well, in particular the lack of seating in the House and Senate lobbies, safety of some stairs and some kind of coat rack upstairs. There will be a time later to make those comments.

(end #2 report)