

League of Women Voters of Wyoming
 2020 Wyoming Legislature Reports
 #3 – Week 3, Feb. 24, 2020
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Several major deadlines loom this week in the 2020 Wyoming Legislature, so it is crunch time for measures that are still in committee or just getting onto General File.

Monday is the last day for bills to pass out of committee in the house of origin.

Tuesday is the last day for bills on General File to be approved in Committee of the Whole.

Wednesday is the last day for second reading.

Thursday is the last day for third reading.

Then the “cross-over” of bills from one chamber to the other is complete, and bills go through a second round of vetting and debate and amendments. The house of origin can reject action by the other chamber and send bills to a conference committee, which has its own risks.

The House and Senate worked their versions of the budget bill (HB1 and SF1) last week. The bills will go to a conference committee, which will trade some amendments, cut others in half and wage a test of wills to create a compromise the House and Senate will adopt and send to the governor.

The amendments offered to SF1 and HB1 (and their disposition) are on the “amendment” tabs on the bill pages on the LSO Website. They are labeled for the part of the budget they affect, so you could single out, for example, all the Department of Health amendments. There were hundreds of amendments debated on Wednesday and Friday. The bills are displayed as PDFs (link on right side of page).

League issues of Medicaid Expansion and the death penalty repeal came up as budget amendments and were defeated, offering time for more debate than the 5 minutes on introduction and perhaps making headway for proposals in 2021.

A major victory of the week was the sound defeat of HB222 – Public Meetings, which would have allowed the State Loan and Investment Board to close meetings to receive training and information. LWVWY worked with the Wyoming Press Association, the Equality State Policy Center, the Liberty Group and other open government advocates, arguing the current public meetings law provides ample exemptions to close meetings to hear sensitive information.

LWV and other ballot-access groups (including AARP and Equality State Policy Center) opposed an attempt to require voters to produce an ID at the polls and to create a “Wyoming voter identification card” for people who didn’t already have an acceptable ID. This is for the non-existent problem of voter impersonation. It appeared as an amendment to SF20, and it was defeated on a 15-15 vote in the Senate. We continue to oppose any restriction on voter registration changes that would prevent qualified electors from selecting a partisan ballot in the Primary Election. HB209 establishes a 14-day blackout period before election day.

The now-inescapable realization that Wyoming needs to increase or redirect revenue streams to meet the education funding formula is creating some frayed nerves, to the point legislators are willing to dip into

royalties that are supposed to go to a trust fund for public schools. The fund – now about \$3.6 billion – is supposed to grow with interest and royalties and produce income to support schools. House Appropriations first killed and then passed a proposed constitutional amendment that would allow this short-sighted diversion. The cry is for education to share the budget pain. There are calls to consolidate school districts, reduce the so-called “basket of goods and services” and raid this trust account. Several legislators definitely begrudge the block grant and want more control over spending. Efficiencies have been made, and future cuts will be felt especially in small, rural schools. Of course, this is while the Legislature rejects revenue raising ideas.

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.

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