

LWVWY Legislative Report #10, March 22, 2021

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LSO Website www.wyoleg.gov.

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday are important deadlines for 2021 bills in their house of origin. Monday is the deadline to hear bills in Committee of the Whole (COW), then Tuesday second reading and then Wednesday third reading.

Two of those do-or-die bills would expand Medicaid to include low-wage, uninsured adults – which amount to about 24,000 people in Wyoming who can't get health insurance anywhere else. The federal stimulus bill includes enhanced Medicaid funding that would cover completely Wyoming's state match for the inclusion. The bills are **SF154 and HB162**. **We must get them heard on the floors of the Senate and House by Monday evening to keep them alive.** **Contact your legislators to support the bills in their respective chambers and press leadership to move them up the list.** If you need more background, check the Website for Healthy Wyoming.

The accompanying bill summary notes several measures that are bumping up against these deadlines. The Senate turned up the pressure on Friday by adjourning early, leaving a long list of bills on General File for Monday. The House has a long list, as well. Easy to bury bad bills, but also hard to hear good ones.

What that means is the person who controls the COW list has the power to kill a measure for 2021. It is a lot of power to doom a bill without a vote, but leadership has to budget the precious hours left to a chamber. It also means that all the time-consuming self-indulgent debate of the past four weeks contributed to the deadline crunch of this week. Not to point fingers. If there are bills you want to be debated or to die, let the House and Senate leadership know.

The House and Senate have appointed five members each for the conference committee that will work on a compromise budget bill this week. Conferees for the Senate are Gierau, Hicks, Kinskey and Steinmetz. Conferees for the House are Nicholas, Kinner, Larsen, Schwartz and Walters. I don't know how much those meetings are going to be online for public access.

SF150 Death penalty repeal went down on the Senate floor 11-19 after a disappointing debate. Sen. Brian Boner led the arguments for repeal, but many senators said they wanted to keep capital punishment on the books – despite its financial and human toll – to achieve vengeance for heinous crimes. We knew this was likely to be a multi-year effort, so we will keep on working.

Meanwhile, the House and Senate are headed to a direct confrontation on school funding. HB173 and SF143 propose different cuts (different amounts and different kinds). The House version is generally seen as more friendly to schools – more evidence-based, more cost-based and more reliant on shifting revenue streams with a possibility of a tax increase. Districts are making contingency plans for cuts anywhere from 5 percent to 18 percent.

HB75 Voter Identification was renamed to remove the reference to “fraud,” since there is none, and it survives in the Senate. LWVWY continues to oppose, despite support from the Secretary of State to boost confidence in our election systems (necessary because of phony claims of fraud?). An impediment to voting, big or small, is intolerable unless there is a compelling need, which there is not.

Another unnecessary elections bill would establish a Primary Election runoff if no candidate received more than 50 percent of the votes. However, county clerks say the 2022 redistricting will make it nearly impossible to squeeze in a third election. The House fended off an attempt to spare legislative Primaries and have the runoff apply only to statewide and federal races. Interestingly, ranked choice voting would resolve the plurality Primary, without an extra election. There may be a push to study the option in the interim.

And the topic of interim studies is contained in another bill, SF147, which has passed the Senate and is in the House. It would diminish the role of the Management Council to assign interim work and give more of that power to the standing committees.

Find copious information about bills and contact information for legislators on wyoleg.gov.

If you have any questions about finding meetings, documents or other aspects of the legislative process, please contact me. Margaret Brown also is eager to help people navigate the Legislature. If you plan to attend any part of the session in person I will be glad to help, as well.

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