

LWVWY Legislative Report #11, March 29, 2021

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LSO Website www.wyoleg.gov.

We have an updated 2021 legislative schedule to recover those two days lost to the snowstorm of the century, which requires the Legislature to come back for two days after a long Easter weekend. It is expected that many lawmakers will choose to join April 6-7 virtually to do the final work of the session: Tuesday, April 6, is the last day for third reading approvals and for concurrences. Wednesday, April 7, is the final day for approval of Joint Conference Committee Reports.

Find the updated session schedule at <https://wyoleg.gov/2021/Schedule.pdf>

Major work in committee this week.

- Medicaid expansion in the form of an amended **HB162** is in Senate Labor Monday morning. LWV has joined other members of Healthy Wyoming in a grass roots appeal for people to contact committee members and other senators who are being bombarded by misinformation by the Foundation for Government Accountability and other national groups. We need three votes in Senate Labor to send Medicaid expansion to the floor of the Senate.
- School Finance is **HB173**, which the House put into fine form to make cuts, redirect revenue, expand reserve funds, include a provisional sales tax and give districts a funding model that works. Senate Education is very jealous of its “cut until it hurts and then cut some more” approach, but the House is firm in this version. Senate Education heard the bill description on Friday and meets again 8 a.m. Monday to hear testimony and work the bill.
- House Education will meet at noon Monday to wrap up **SF130**, which is supposed to use the Department of Education and the State Loan and Investment Board to let charter schools thrive in isolated rural communities, when they fail to win approval by district trustees. While the Senate wants to slash education funding, it seems to think the solution is small and inefficient schools operating all by themselves.
- On Tuesday, Senate Corporations is expected to take up **HB75 Voter ID**, which is marginally acceptable to some because it’s been watered down so much but which is still unacceptable to LWVWY because it creates a burden, no matter how small, for voters and for elections workers, with no demonstrable gain. Meanwhile, it reinforces the false narrative of insecure elections in Wyoming. The Secretary of State has decided to support as a way to ensure voter confidence.

Healthy Wyoming has a robust collection of handouts and talking points for Medicaid expansion, plus handy online forms for contacting legislators. LWVWY President Susan Simpson sent out the package on Saturday, and they are attached to his report. Also, here is the Department of Health’s latest analysis of Medicaid expansion numbers:

<https://health.wyo.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/WDH-WY-Medicaid-Expansion-Estimates-2021.pdf>

What the Senate needs to know is that about 24,000 low-wage adults are out there with no access to real health insurance, and they need this eligibility for Medicaid. More than 90 percent of Wyoming providers participate in Medicaid now, so the structure is there and able to handle the new patients without taking away from current Medicaid recipients. Enhanced federal funding for Medicaid will cover the state match, so we can do this without dipping into our General Fund.

The budget bill Joint Conference Committee finished its work to resolve differences in the budget bills as passed by the House and Senate, and the committee members will present their compromise “report” to their respective chambers to win their approval this week. They want to get it to the governor in time to know and perhaps challenge his vetoes. The JCC Report should be available as part of the budget bill digest this week.

Joint committees also will meet this week to compose a list of requested study topics for the interim, with the potential of writing bills for the 2022 session. The Management Council will assign topics and approve budgets for interim work. We’ll see how much work the committees will want to continue online, which saves considerable travel time and money.

Deadlines this week:

Wednesday, March 31, is the last day for bills to be reported out of committee in the second house.

Thursday, April 1, is the last day for Committee of the Whole in the second house.

Friday, April 2, is the last day for 2nd reading in the second house.

After return from the long **Major deadlines this week** Easter weekend, Tuesday is the last day for 3rd readings and for concurrence on amendments and Joint Conference Committee Reports.

Wednesday is the deadline for veto overrides, if any, and then adjournment by midnight.

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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