

LWVWY Legislative Report #2
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The second week (sort of) of the 2021 Wyoming Legislature begins this week. The Joint Appropriations Committee worked a long day Friday on what will become HB1 and SF1, the supplemental budget bill that makes severe cuts in the budget that was passed just a year ago for the 2021-2022 biennium. The Management Council has promised to deliver it to the public by Feb. 22.

The Legislature uses a “mirror” bill format for budgets, so the House and Senate work their versions simultaneously, present them to the other chamber and then go straight to a conference committee. It purports to be efficient, but it also is virtually impossible for the public to track and advocate for/against amendments.

The session, interrupted by breaks and non-legislative days, had Day 1 on Jan. 12 and resumes (virtually) with Days 2-4 on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of this week. The goal is to debate and give final approval to a number of bills reported out of committee last week. Days 5-9 are in the week of Feb. 1. Then a break, followed by a week of committee meetings. Then, with optimism, a reconvening of lawmakers in person in the Capitol starting on March 1. The Legislature has a lot of members who just can't bring themselves to wear masks, so we'll see.

Sen. Hank Coe of Cody, long-time chairman of Senate Education, died during last week, and Wyoming lost a true statesman of the old school (which we are seeing less of in the new Legislature).

The Management Council approved proposed guidelines and goals for a plan to redistrict the state with new Census numbers. The document is attached here and also find it at <https://wyoleg.gov/InterimCommittee/2021/SMC-20210118ProposedRedistrictingGuidelines2022.pdf>
Joint Corporations will prepare a “library” of alternate plans for public and official comment and write a final report to the Legislature by Dec. 20, 2021.

Voter ID is back, HB75 Voter fraud protection, with a disheartening number of co-sponsors in the House (41) and Senate (15), including many legislators who know full well Wyoming does not have a problem with impersonations at the polls. It would require registered voters to present a government-issued or tribal ID before casting a ballot. We will oppose this measure, whose main effect will be to suppress voting. We will work with the Equality State Policy Center and county election officials, as we always do.

Rep. Zwonitzer is sponsoring a bill to consolidate the 48 school districts down to 23, to save money through speculative efficiencies, but it will be a hard sell to districts who are very different from their neighbors.

You can stream the House and Senate sessions live, or watch recorded versions later, with links provided on the LSO Website. They will be working long days to complete work on all the bills that made it out of committee last week. Daily calendars for House and Senate floor action will be available using links provided on the LSO Home page. No committee meeting scheduled this week.

The LSO's guide to the Legislature has much useful information, found at <https://wyoleg.gov/docs/CitizenGuidebook.pdf>.

Attached to this report is:

- A preview of bills filed so far for the 2021 session
- The 2021 General Session Schedule
- Summary of leadership and committee assignments

If you have any questions about using the LSO Website or how to participate in the legislative process, please email me at marguerite.herman@gmail.com.