

LWVWY Legislative Report #4
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The Wyoming Legislature finished the virtual part of its 2021 session last week, entering a 3-week break before it reconvenes in person on March 1. Advocates will use this time to talk to their legislators at home about a long list of bills that were filed just before the break, and legislators can continue to send requests to Legislative Service Office bill-drafters.

We call can use the time to read the mirror HB1 and SF1 budget bills, which would cut the biennial budget bill passed in 2020 by about \$450 million. Find them on the regular list of bills for the 2021 session, on the right side of the display as PDFs, along with lengthy Fiscal Impact documents.

The House has many new members who tended to use the virtual podium more as a soapbox, so that slowed down the votes during the third week. One gets the impression they came to the task not so much to listen and learn as to lecture and declaim. One hopes that some experience and watching the veterans will help make for a productive March session.

And if there were any doubt about the “campaigns” that sent the lawmakers to Cheyenne, observe the new bill filings. Several aim at restricting public health orders, and one even wants to elect our state health officer. Other frustrations take shape in a bill to elect our attorney general, who some lawmakers want to be aggressively fighting presidential orders on BLM leasing, challenging federal restrictions on guns and joining Texas in its dispute of presidential election results. There are bills to cut education spending but also to add 5,100 private school students to state funding. One group has resurrected model legislation from last year to “preserve” the Second Amendment.

The other package of bills of note relate to revenue and taxation. The House spent several hours debating HB49 Agency fees revisions, a bill by the Joint Appropriations Committee to update the fees – some of them decades old -- charged by various agencies to support important public services. There was a tendency to focus on sparing people a fee increase, without connecting the revenue to valuable services, again reflecting the election campaigns of 2020. HB49 eventually passed 40-19-2 and was sent to the Senate.

On the topic of the merits of electing vs. appointing certain officials, one House bill proposed making the county assessor a professional appointed position. Currently, it is elected and partisan.

If anyone is interested in getting a professional, fact-based assessment of the presidential moratorium on public lands oil and gas leasing, watch a recording of the presentation to House Minerals on Friday. Here is the YouTube link, or you can find the meeting on the LSO

legislative meeting schedule and click on “watch.”

www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5khq9WRfdc&feature=youtu.be

Some of the House members clearly had not read the executive order and were somewhat flailing with a desire to do something. The presenters had good information and advice, always an advisable place to start. We don't know the long-range impact on Wyoming, yet.

When the Legislature reconvenes, the House Education and Revenue committees will have a very full roster of bills to work. I suspect things will move quickly, so please watch the Legislative Meetings listing on the LSO Website.

As always, if you have any questions about finding meetings, documents or other aspects of the legislative process, please contact me. If you plan to attend any part of the session in person I will be glad to help, as well.

I am attaching to this legislative report and list of bills the Truckers' Association legislative directory as a PDF. They print this every Legislature, and it contains information that the LSO legislative directory does not. Together, they do help form something of a profile of legislators. I also am attaching PDFS of the House and Senate seating charts, which are especially helpful if you are watching in person.

You can stream the House and Senate sessions live, or watch recorded versions later, with links provided on the LSO Website, attached to the legislative meeting notice.

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