

LWVWY Legislative Report #6
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The 2021 Wyoming Legislature has a heavy week of committee meetings listed on the “Legislative Meetings” calendar of the LSO Website, revised from last week. It is heavy because of both the amount and importance of the proposals in committees Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. That will help front load the House and Senate General File and get bills moving through the process when they reconvene in person March 1. (It’s expected some legislators will continue to join virtually, but most will be at the Capitol.)

Meanwhile, lawmakers filed a few more bills last week, including yet one more to regulate health officers and their orders, one that would restrict access to abortions and one that would require school districts to come up with their own non-state funding for activities.

Please check out the schedule for the full week. Here are bill of interest to LWVWY scheduled to be heard. I suggest you listen to the school funding recalibration presentation to Senate Education on Wednesday morning to understand the issues, hear the 2021 bill and get a preview of 2021 action. On Thursday, House Education plans to take up that bill, HB61, and the slash and burn HB89 School Finance Amendments measure. You may stream the meetings on YouTube. You must sign up to testify.

Bills of interest on revised committee schedule for this week:

Feb. 22	Joint Appropriations	Various draft bills regarding federal funds, state budgeting, state investment administration, IT and community college funding, agency fees and veterans’ tax exemptions. Find the meeting on the calendar for Feb. 22 and click on “Details” for the day’s agenda and meeting materials. They are taking limited public testimony. Click on “Testify” to sign up.
Feb. 23	Senate Revenue House Revenue Senate Corporations House Transportation	SJ1 Taxes to voters constitutional amendment HJ3 State lands mineral royalties-constitutional amendment SF30 Pandemic response review task force SF86 Attorney General-elected official SF46 Air ambulance membership-regs and disclosures HB26 Fuel tax
Feb. 24	House Minerals Senate Education Senate Labor House Corporations	HB7 Air ambulance membership organizations-regulations HB51 School finance recalibration presentation SF83 Gillette college community college district SF80 Public health orders-local and legislative oversight HB75 Voter fraud prevention
Feb. 25	House Education	HB61 School finance recalibration HB89 School finance amendments

Feb. 26 House Judiciary HB103 Journalists-privileged communication
 Nothing scheduled so far.

It seems AARP and other groups view a voter ID law is inevitable, regardless of the false premise it is based on. I have heard arguments that it is futile to resist such a top priority for the majority party, that the bill tries to make it easier to get an ID and that it doesn't do much damage. I contend that if it discourages any voting, with nothing to gain, it is not a good bill. In fact, a co-presenter with Susan Simpson on a program presented by the Equality State Policy Center had several ideas that make voting **easier** and that **increase** voter participation. The evidence from our state and local elections officials is that we do not have a problem with secure registration (which does require an ID) or secure elections. **HB75** is in House Corporations on Wednesday.

LWVWY has not previously testified on school finance proposals, except to support actions that comply with the Wyoming Constitution to finance a complete and uniform education in Wyoming and to raise revenue for that duty, if previously reliable revenue streams dry up (as they have). Proponents for deep, debilitating cuts argue incorrectly that schools have not started cutting (they have) and that residents of the state desire low tax rates more than they support sustainable school budgets. Interim work on recalibrating the components of our school funding formula (aka "the model") will be explained to Senate Education on Wednesday, and I recommend you listen in. House Education will begin working the recalibration bill, **HB61**, on Thursday.

Just to let you know, I plan to testify in my capacity as a school trustee against **HJ3** State lands mineral royalties constitutional amendment as a taking from future school children and another example of legislative failure to find a permanent and durable solution to school funding.

Find contact information for legislators on wyoleg.gov, home page, heading "Legislators."

The mirror 2021 budget revision proposals, HB1 and SF1, are expected to be out on the House and Senate floors the week of March 8, and during that time it will be harder to secure much time and attention from lawmakers in either chamber. So, the next couple of weeks are important to get your messages to legislators, especially in the coming week while they are still in their home districts.

There is no Medicaid expansion bill nor a death penalty repeal bill yet, but we are expecting both, and I will help League members keep track of those and opportunities to advocate and testify. The Healthy Wyoming effort on Medicaid expansion (Medex) is being staffed by the Equality State Policy Center and Better Wyoming. The death penalty repeal effort has several partners, in addition to the League of Women Voters, including Conservatives Concerned About the Death Penalty, ACLU, Equal Justice USA and Diocese of Cheyenne. Both Healthy Wyoming and Wyoming Campaign to End the Death Penalty have Facebook pages that feature news and events.

Another note on the March session. Budget debate and major must-do proposals for school finance and various revenue-raising bills will consume a lot of the precious time, and many of the most controversial and nakedly ideological proposals are likely to be sidelined. There are many ways leadership can do that, primarily making sure bills get in and out of committee too late to get through the process by adjournment. Time management is a high priority, and bills that are far-fetched or primarily chest thumping or “sending a message” probably won’t get much exposure.

Along those lines, please note the time legislators (mostly new ones and mostly in the House) consume with declamations that result in demise of a lot of bills, as they run up against deadlines. With that, leadership will be strategic at bills that are heard earlier and bills that are heard later.

As always, 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 use the LSO Website. If you plan to attend any part of the session in person I will be glad to help, as well.

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