

LWVWY Legislative Report #7  
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Wyoming legislators start the “live” portion of their 2021 session on March 1, which includes some issues they must deal with, some of real but optional importance and many that are primarily ideological in nature. But be aware those ideological bills can distract and consume vast amounts of time, so that important issues suffer.

On the mandatory list are a major budget bill rewrite with deep cuts, education funding and proposals to replace revenue from the struggling (some would say moribund) energy sector. Important issues include Medicaid expansion, death penalty repeal, air ambulance membership disclosure and Gillette Community College creation

Among the expendable issues are a whole range of sideboards for health orders, bestiality as a crime, recall of state officials, including the judicial branch under the state Ethics and Disclosure Act and election of a state health officer and the attorney general.

And then bad ideas include voter ID, a suite of bills to protect gun rights, extending education funding to children **not** enrolled in public schools and several no-evidence-based school funding ideas. Not on our lobbying list but important to many LWV members are measures to restrict abortions.

Kudos to Rep. Cathy Connolly for putting on the table what others have hinted at: removal of most sales tax exemptions on services, much as South Dakota does. It would generate an estimated \$100 million a year for the General Fund and local governments. The idea comes up occasionally as a way to spread the tax burden around, and every special interest has an argument why it must be spared. The bill doesn't have much of a chance, but it's a reminder of the revenue Wyoming foregoes with exemptions. Along those lines is a proposed repeal of a tax exemption on wind energy, which the wind industry is strongly opposing.

The latest news on the Medicaid expansion front is the intent of Congress (in the continuing resolution) to put enough money into the traditional Medicaid to more than cover the state's share of funding for expansion of eligibility to low-wage and unemployed adults. Meanwhile, a proposal to extend Medicaid coverage finally has been filed, in the form of a bill to study the wisdom of expansion in Wyoming and seek permission with the federal government to make that change to our Medicaid system. Of course, the bill gives the Legislature the opportunity to block the effort, and it anticipates the state's wanting to impose extra limits on its own desperately uninsured. Is that enough to win over the opponents? We'll see.

What we can expect this week: All the bills that passed out of committee last week will be handed to the House and Senate clerks on Monday and will go on General File for full debate. And the scores of bills that people have been filing since the Legislature went on break will be

officially introduced and referred to committee, so they can proceed before a very tight schedule of deadlines. This is where leadership may calculate the urgency/importance of a bill against the time it will consume, and some legislation may be left to languish on the list of bills awaiting introduction. If you listened to floor debate in February, you probably noticed the tendency (especially in the House) to stand up and express every thought. We'll see if that continues when the setting is the august legislative chambers.

House Education hopes to wrap up the recalibration bill on Monday and get it to the floor. Expect several armchair expert amendments that would fail any constitutional test of being evidence-based, cost-based, uniform and complete. Check the "legislative meetings" tab for other committee meetings and for the floor calendars for the House and Senate. This electronic format for the calendars allows LSO to post the action on bills every few minutes. Once more bills are officially introduced, the committee schedules will be posted for the rest of the week.

You can come to the Capitol to monitor legislative action and talk to lawmakers, or you can continue to follow and participate via YouTube and Zoom links provided for each legislative meeting. Most legislators will be wearing masks, I believe. They are keeping paper to a minimum, so you will have to text or email legislators to ask them to come out to the lobby. I'm not sure how much people will be allowed to congregate in the lobbies, so face-to-face meetings may be hard to get.

Find contact information for legislators on [wyoleg.gov](http://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.

Please take a look at the bill summary. 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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