

LWVWY Legislative Report #8, March 8, 2021

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LSO Website www.wyoleg.gov.

This is “Budget Week” for the 2021 Wyoming Legislature. The Senate and House take up mirror budget bills SF1 and HB1 in Committee of the Whole on Monday and Tuesday. Second and third readings, with consideration of scores of amendments, are on Wednesday and Friday. A joint conference committee will write a compromise version (all week, if necessary) that can win support from both chambers and be sent to the governor for his signature.

The deadlines for introduction of bills passed in the House and Senate last week, so any measure not already in committee is dead for this session. Be aware of other deadlines as they fall:

March 17 - Report out of committee in house of origin

March 18 – Committee of the Whole in house of origin

March 19 – Second Reading house of origin

March 22 – Third reading house of origin

March 24 – Vote on budget compromise

March 26 – Committee in second house

March 29 – Committee of the Whole in second house

March 30 – Second reading second house

March 31 – Third reading second house

April 1 – Concurrence on amendments

April 2 -- Veto override votes and adjournment

Big vote for Medicaid expansion coming Monday:

Two bills emerged last week to expand Medicaid, though in very different ways. The better option is SF154, sponsored by Sen. Chris Rothfuss, for simple expansion, and that will be in Senate Labor on Monday morning. This is the time to contact those committee members and urge approval with whatever arguments you want to make. Get lots of background at healthywyoming.org.

HB162, sponsored by Rep. John Romero-Martinez, is very involved with lots of provisions, entitled “Medical treatment opportunity act.” The governor and Departments of Corrections, Health and Insurance would come up with a proposal and negotiate with the feds for a Wyoming version that might include cost sharing or a work requirements. THEN, the Legislature would have 3 months to assemble and veto it.

A bill to repeal the death penalty, SF150, is out of committee and on General File in the Senate. Testimony before Senate Revenue on March 4 was moving and informative, including testimony from survivors of murder victims. I recommend it as moving and informative. YouTube link is https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_xlh9DS9wWY. Start at the 1 hour mark.

Still in motion is the major rewrite and funding of Wyoming’s school financing system. The latest proposal, which came out of House Education this past week, contains a cut of about \$60 million for the block grants that go to the 48 school districts. You can learn a lot from the House

Education discussion of HB173 substitute 1, which was approved and sent out to the floor on Wednesday. The bill includes revenue to the School Foundation Program from the Legislative Stabilization Reserve Account, a 1 percent use tax and a diversion of some severance taxes to the School Foundation Program.

Meanwhile, Senate Education is going to hear a couple of proposals from Sen. Charles Scott. One (SJ4) is a constitutional amendment to make school construction the responsibility of districts, with some state support. The other is SF143, which lays out his own suggestions for ways to cut school funding, including reimbursing school districts 90 percent of transportation and special ed costs (with NO evidence of over-spending.)

Proposed restrictions on health orders/health officials are progressing, trying to make a case that science-based health orders should be subject to public opinion and political action. SF80 was passed out of Senate Labor last week. Four bills are in House Corporations Monday afternoon, for you to watch or testify: HB98, HB113, HB127 and HB56. Senate Labor heard testimony in favor of SF30, which would study state response to the pandemic and report on things we did wrong and could do better in the future.

The voting “fraud prevention” bill, HB75, sailed through the House (51-9) and is in the Senate. In an attempt to reduce looking like suppression, the House eased up on what kind of ID was required to present at the polls. As if to say, it may be pointless but it’s not real big.

Election bills still alive:

HB74 Elected Officials-Removal (House Corporations)

HB145 Election runoffs (Senate Corporations)

HB187 Elected official residency requirement (House Corporations)

SF138 School board trustees-party affiliation (Senate Education)

Most gun-related bills met their demise by missing the introduction deadline, although SF67 Repeal gun free zones is alive and well ready for Committee of the Whole in the Senate.

LWVWY has a position supporting hate crimes legislation, and Casper Rep. Sweeney has filed HB218 Bias motivated crime. His bill, in House Judiciary, would allow a sentencing judge to find that a crime was biased and the convicted individual should get an enhanced sentence.

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. House and Senate lobbies have a 10-person limit, but so far there has been plenty of room to call out legislators and speak briefly with them.

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

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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