

To: Wyoming LWV members
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Re: 2023 WyoLeg Report #5
Date: Feb 6, 2023

The filing of new 2023 bills is over, and the extant bills will die at increasing rates, as in impossible number of proposals cannot make it through the process by the drop-dead deadlines. The deadline for new bills fell last week, and then on Friday the deadline for bills to be reported out of committee in the house of origin. (Senate bills in Senate committees, House bills out of House committees) On Monday, those bills that made it out of committee must clear the Committee of the Whole. Then 2nd reading on Tuesday and 3rd reading on Wednesday.

Some failed bills and budget amendments could turn into proposals for interim study. There is an opportunity at the end of the 2023 session to suggest issues the joint committees should study, with an eye toward writing bills for the 2024 budget session. On the LSO web bill page, you now can reduce the list to “active” or “inactive” bills. Fifty bills and resolutions are now dead, by legislative action or inaction.

Monday is General File cutoff, a long, stressful day for legislators. Whatever is not taken up in Committee of the Whole by the close of business is dead for the session, although those bills may inspire requests for interim study and committee bill-writing. House and Senate leadership have great discretion about how bills move up the list and when to end the day.

Check the session schedule for other deadlines, available from the home page from the Legislative Service Office website wyoleg.gov.

Entering week #4 of the session, it looks as if **HB4 – Medicaid 12 month postpartum coverage (so-called “Medicaid for Moms”)** will be heard on General File. Rep. Steve Harshman had written a budget amendment for the extension of Medicaid coverage for new moms but announced he was withdrawing it because Majority Floor Leader Neiman had promised it would be heard on Monday. Keep those emails, texts and phone calls coming to House members to vote YES on HB4. They often refer to the “will of the people,” so they should be listening.

Other issues of key interest to LWVWY include proposed restrictions on voting and registration.

Major action last week was the explanation of the mirror budget bills SF1 and HB1 and its debate and amendments through the Senate and House to final passage on Friday. Next, the chambers will review the amended bill from the other chambers, reject it and send the supplemental budget to a conference committee. There, appointed conference committee members will horse-trade amendments and build consensus and end up with a compromise budget that will go back to the two chambers for approval. This legislative budget then goes to the governor, and he will issue line item vetoes. Then the House and Senate, grumbling, will decide whether to try to override the vetoes or just live with them. If there have been sore feelings between the House and Senate during the session, they can become a stumbling block to agreement.

If you listened to the exhaustive budget amendment debate on Wednesday (2nd reading) and Friday (3rd reading), you learned about the internal dynamics of the House and Senate and the influence of the so-called Freedom Caucus. One example is House debate on Friday afternoon to shut down the University of Wyoming’s gender and women’s study program (3rd reading amendment #7 to HB1, sponsored by Ward and Strock). The amendment failed. Also notable was action by both the House and Senate for identical External Cost Adjustments for school finance. (Mirror amendments are locked in and cannot be bargained away in conference committee.) The LSO bill page lists all amendments but not the vote counts.

This also is time when bills passed out of one chamber “cross over” to the other, and House and Senate committees get to work on each other’s bills, sometimes with very different debate and results as bills face a fresh test. Bills that sail through the House and Senate can emerge from a committee of the other chamber in a very different form or can die altogether.

Still moving are several measures relating to elections, though some are greatly amended.

- The issue of runoff primary election is dead for the session.
- Cross-over restriction bills are HB207 and HB103.
- HB279 requires an ID to request an absentee ballot in person.
- HJ10 to seek a constitutional requirement to disclose political campaign spending didn’t make it out of committee in time.
- Under SF40, only campaigns with purely federal candidates and issues can skip state campaign finance reporting.
- HB179, which prohibits “ballot harvesting,” on General File. House Corporations removed language that attempted to restrict the kind of people an absentee voter could designate to deliver a ballot.
- SF153 establishes a requirement for county-level election audits and for an “air gap” to ensure voting machines are not accessible online. HB47 sets into statute the state rules about certifying voting machines.
- SF131 tried to prevent anyone but clerks and Secretary of State give out forms to use to request an absentee ballot. Now it’s amended to say anyone can give out the forms, but they can’t call them “official election documents,” as some candidates did last fall.
- LWV supports HB263 to restore voting rights to non-violent felons after they complete their sentences, including payment of fines and restitutions. Previous restoration bills limited the felony record to 1. It does impose a burden on the Department of Corrections to go back through years of paper records.

The LSO website has individual bill information (including amendments, status and roll call votes) and House and Senate floor and committee schedules. Also you may explore legislation with the “search bills” link to a list of bills by subject matter.

Monday is a big day for General File, while committees begin work in earnest on bills that have passed the other chamber. Find House and Senate floor calendars and committee meeting lists at <https://wyoleg.gov/Calendar/20230205/Meeting>

Our Legislative Liaison Committee continues to work with LWVUS on the bill tracking program Quorum, which is useful to follow bills of interest to our state League. Find the tracker at <https://www.quorum.us/spreadsheet/external/RfeAZatgWJauorqjDnyE/>. Note: You can “filter” the bills by House and Senate. In the next column, you can sort the bills by number.