

2024 Budget Session of Wyoming Legislature
Week 4 – March 4, 2024

March fourth – that should be the direction for the final scheduled week of the 2024 session, as deadlines loom for passage of the state’s biennial budget. However, the joint conference committee working on a House-Senate budget compromise seems to be making little progress.

The 2024 Wyoming legislative session is scheduled to adjourn on March 8. As the week begins, the 10-member budget conference committee has met three times—twice on Wednesday and once briefly on Thursday—and all they officially have is a House proposal to reverse some of the most contentious actions taken on the Senate floor and to defer to House positions. The proposal includes \$110 million for school construction, a new \$69 million veterans’ home in Buffalo, \$200 million for large energy projects, and the University of Wyoming gender studies and DEI programs.

There are lots of political maneuvering behind Senate President Ogden Driskill’s appointment of the five Senate conferees. Still, it is apparent that Senate Appropriations Chairman David Kinsky bears most of the work for an inexperienced group. On the other side are experienced House Appropriations members, who laid out their proposals midday Thursday. If this committee fails, Driskill can appoint another set of Senate conferees. However, there are risks with a second committee that is “free” to bargain anew with everything on the table.

Meanwhile, everyone hopes the budget conference committee can progress quickly towards a compromise version this week. Once the House and Senate agree on a budget, the governor has three days to approve or line-item veto with very little time for override votes. The session schedule still leaves three days to spare in the Legislature’s two-year, 60-day limit, and they could use that time to finish the budget.

The budget is the only absolute imperative for this session, but homeowner property tax relief is a political imperative. The Senate is working on six House-passed bills, while the House is working on one Senate-passed tax relief bill. These bills include refunds, exemptions, limits on increases, and lower assessment rates. One is tied to the 2023 constitutional amendment (on the ballot in November) to create a separate assessment rate for residential property. The biggest concern is the resulting revenue loss to education and local government without some “backfill” option. WyoFile provides a good [summary](#) of the issues and proposals.

Bills that are changed in the second chamber return to the house of origin to okay amendments. Without that, the bills go to conference committees for compromise. If a compromise is not reached that is acceptable by both houses by adjournment, those bills are dead. The Legislative State Office (LSO) tries to notice conference committee meetings on the [Legislative Meetings](#)

tab on the [Wyoming Legislature website](#), and the meetings are streamed and recorded on YouTube. Sometimes the meetings take place without much warning, or conferees meet on the fly as they can find opportunities.

Legislators are looking toward interim work on topics to study (with the help of LSO staff) and possibly address committee bills for the 2025 session. During this week, joint standing committees will consider requests from their members and the public to put together an official application to the Management Council to approve topics and budgets for the interim. LWVWY submitted two topic requests: online voter registration and open primaries. Both are requests to Joint Corporations. Management Council will meet **after** the session to decide interim priorities and assign work.

Consult the [Legislative Service Office's](#) home page for the 2024 session schedules, including Senate and House floor daily calendars and committee meetings. Also, consult Bill Tracker 50, an online tool used by LWV Wyoming for bill management and monitoring. The state board has identified three priorities for our 2024 focus: Constitutional Issues, Election and Voter Services, Government Accountability and Transparency. The [LWVWY 2024 Bill Tracker](#) includes bill information and the LWV Wyoming's position (support, oppose, monitor). The Bill Tracker can also be found on the [LWVWY home page](#).

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Marguerite Herman, LWVWY Lobbyist
307-630-8095
Marguerite.herman@gmail.com