

News Release



WYOMING SENATE DISTRICT 3

FOR RELEASE Immediately
CONTACT Senator Cheri E. Steinmetz
TO REACH (307) 534-5342

66TH LEGISLATURE APPROVES HISTORIC BALANCED BUDGET AND PASSES HISTORIC LEGISLATION

Final Budget Bill Reduces Government Spending by \$430 Million While Retaining Critical Services for Wyoming's Most Vulnerable Citizens, Investments to Foster Economic Growth and Diversification

On Monday, March 30, the Wyoming Legislature approved a balanced budget that significantly reduces government spending in response to historic revenue shortfalls created by the pandemic and declining coal, oil and natural gas production and prices. The bill (HB 001) passed with broad bipartisan support in both the House (57-4) and Senate (26-3). The Governor signed the bill into law with minor vetoes.

The bill includes **approximately \$430 million in spending reductions**—about 96% of the \$446 million recommended by the Joint Appropriations Committee. It contains **no tax increases**. At the same time, the bill **preserves funding for services critical to Wyoming's vulnerable populations and investments to continue to strengthen and grow our economy**, including: the Department of Health and the Department of Family Services; the University of Wyoming and the state's Community Colleges; Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage (CCUS); the UW cryptocurrency matching program and advisory council; and the Permanent Wyoming Mineral Trust Fund, an investment account that will continue to produce returns for the state.

The budget was rigorously debated and amended by both chambers, including 24 amendments made by the House and 16 by the Senate. The **Joint Conference Committee ultimately adopted six of the House amendments, three of the Senate amendments and compromised on 10 other amendments**. The final budget is the product of **principled compromise** that struck common ground and achieved the priorities of both chambers. It promotes **fiscal accountability and transparency** and **continued economic growth and development**, which Wyoming voters expect of their elected officials.

Supplemental Budget Bill for FY2021-2022 Fiscal Biennium.

Reductions or Additional Appropriations by Funding Source*:

- General Fund (GF) appropriations reduced by \$430 million;
- Federal Funds (FF) appropriations reduced by \$24.9 million;

- School Foundation Program Account (S5) appropriations reduced by \$5.2 million;
- School Capital Construction Account (S6) appropriations reduced by \$9.0 million;
- Net Legislative Stabilization Reserve Account (S10) appropriations increase of \$2.4 million;*
- Net Strategic Investments and Projects Account (S13) appropriations increase of \$113.9 million;
- Net Other Funds** appropriations increase of \$51.2 million.
- **The bill also contains reductions to total authorized positions for the Executive Branch and Judicial Branch of 324 (303 full-time equivalent (FTE) and 21 part-time equivalent (PTE)).** These FTE position reductions are summarized as follows:
 - Department of Corrections: 161 FTE
 - Department of Family Services: 50 FTE
 - Attorney General's Office, Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources: 11 FTE each
 - Department of Enterprise Technology Services: 10 FTE
 - Judicial Branch: 5 FTE
 - All Other Agencies: 55 FTE

The budget preserves investments that will continue to yield returns for the State, which can be used to supplement future budgets.

- The bill directs \$94.9 million to the Permanent Wyoming Mineral Trust Fund and the Common School Permanent Land Fund.

The budget's spending reductions were made only after thorough consideration and debate, and were structured to ensure fairness and to preserve the most critical services.

- 24 amendments were proposed by the House and 16 by the Senate. The JCC ultimately adopted six of the House amendments, three of the Senate amendments and compromised on 10 other amendments.
- Cuts were made to programs across the board. There were no "sacred cows" on the General Fund side of the budget.
- The budget passed with overwhelming bipartisan support in both the House and Senate, and, through prudent compromise, achieves the priorities of both Chambers.

The Legislature is committed to creating long-term economic growth and diversification, and to solving the State's structural revenue shortfalls.

Historic Legislation

Agriculture Bills that PASSED:

HB51 Meat processing programs, HB52 Wyoming meat packing initiative, HB52 Wyoming school protein enhancement project and SF142 Defending Wyoming business-trade and commerce amendments are all wins for Wyoming Ag producers and consumers. The House bills all strengthen the meat packing industry in Wyoming while SF142 allows for anti-trust litigation and strengthens consumer protection.

SF50 COVID-19 business relief programs agriculture reappropriates unused CARES money on a per head basis for ag producers.

The Ag committee also updated the animal abuse statues and created bonding authority for impounded animals in **SF25 Animal impound proceedings-bond and disposition** and **SF26 Animal abuse statues reorganization and update**.

HB 229 Livestock identification choice act protects the rights of livestock producers to identify livestock with the official method of their choice for disease traceability.

HB188 Irrigation and water conservancy loans allows accesses to low interest loans for irrigation and water conservancy districts in the Capital Construction Loan Program administered by the State Land and Investment Board.

Education Bills that PASSED:

SF130 Charter Schools is the only education bill that both houses of the Legislature could agree upon. The bill revises the overall process for the approval and renewal of charter schools. It also provides that in addition to the local school district board, the State Loan and Investment Board can authorize up to three charter schools.

Unfortunately, the House and Senate could not find a solution that both bodies could agree upon regarding the approximately \$300 Million dollar and rising structural deficit facing the State's K-12 education system. With the Biden administrations recent announcement of the American Recovery Plan, federal dollars are slated at \$303 Million for K-12 education with maintenance of effort and equity requirements attached to the funds.

Election Bills the PASSED:

HB75 Voter identification finally passed this year which brings and end to a thirteen-year battle over the legislation. The bill requires that identification be provided before in-person voting and sets forth acceptable means of identification.

Other important election issues that failed to pass such as election run offs, the prohibition of private funds in elections and voter registration/crossover voting are topics being proposed in the interim by the Joint Corporations Committee.

Energy Bills that PASSED:

HB207 Coal fired generation facility closures litigation provides \$1.2 million dollars of funding to the attorney general for court challenges against other states under the commerce clause when Wyoming's economy or ability to produce and use coal fire power are detrimentally affected. It also applies to coal port litigation.

HB166 Utilities-presumption against facility retirements requires that the public service commission shall not approve the retirement of an electric generation facility unless it is in the best interest of Wyoming consumers and the State of Wyoming.

Gun Bills that PASSED:

HB116 Concealed carry-residency requirement-2 allows for citizens of the United States that meet the requirements of current law to carry a concealed firearm in the State of Wyoming without a permit.

HB236 Firearms transactions-financial discrimination prohibits financial institutions from discriminating against firearms businesses and authorizes the Wyoming Attorney General to bring action for violations and recommend that the Governor terminate and state business relationship with the entity.

SF155 Limiting firearm seizure and regulation during emergencies prohibits the executive branch from closure of gun shops, shooting ranges, placing restrictions on the sale of weapons and ammunition, and suspension or revocation of permits to concealed carrying of weapons during states of emergency.

Unfortunately, the Second Amendment Preservation Act was, as originally introduced, unconstitutional and eliminated qualified immunity for law enforcement officers (they could be personally sued) if for any reason they enforced federal gun laws or seized firearms and accessories inconsistent with the new state statutes even if by accident or inadvertently. It also resulted in fines of up to \$50,000 for any state, city, or county agency that employed the offending law enforcement officer. It supposedly nullified federal law which has been struck down by the supreme court on numerous occasions and rejected by the states. Consequently, **as introduced the bill was unconstitutional.**

Public Health Emergencies Bills that PASSED:

HB109 Local health officers education requirements allows for physicians assistants and registered nurses along with doctors to be public health officers.

HB127 Public health amendments requires 48 hours of notice and public comment before health orders are implemented unless the delay will cause life threatening physical harm. The bill also gives local governments control after 10 days of a public health order being in place. Parents and caregivers of vulnerable adults are protected from limitation of care, custody, or control. It allows for the Governor to appoint the state health officer and remove him or her. It also states the "Any order issued under this section that restrict individuals' movement or their ability to engage in any activity that applies to individuals not under isolation or quarantine order and that is designed to prevent or limit the transmission of a contagious or possibly contagious disease shall be effective for a period of not more than ten (10) days. Subsequent orders for the same or substantially same purpose shall only be issued by the governor, with consultation provided by the state health officer and shall be in effect for not more than sixty (60) days."

Tax Bills that PASSED:

By my count there were 21 bills that proposed new taxes, NONE passed. The only bill dealing with taxes that passed was **HB179 Optional municipal tax-election** which removes the requirement that municipalities propose taxes only in a general election.

Other Bills of Importance that PASSED:

SF34 Born alive-infant means of care requires that an infant born alive during an abortion receive the same means of care as any other infant born alive.

SF96 Homicide amendments creates the crimes of first- and second-degree murder for an unborn child.

HB253 Higher education-ban on funding for abortions prohibits the use of appropriated state funds to the University of Wyoming or Wyoming Community Colleges for elective abortions or group health insurance the provides coverage for elective abortions.

HB111 Access to anatomical gifts and organ transplants prohibits discrimination for and anatomical gift, organ transplant or related treatment against a person based on disability.

HB95 Game road kill allows people to collect unintentionally killed animals on the road with possession of a donation certificate.

SF87 Voyeurism amendments extends the enumerated places where a person has a reasonable expectation of privacy, addresses camera recordings and livestreaming, and stiffens penalties associated with voyeurism.

HB46 Crime of bestiality makes bestiality a crime in Wyoming and excludes the ordinary practices of animal husbandry.

SF157 Property rights-limitation on local authority prohibits cities and towns from placing land use conditions on the connection of municipal sewer service. A win for private property rights.

HB158 Local land use planning and zoning creates a prohibition on zoning resolutions, ordinances and plans from requiring compliance with local land use plans. A win for private property rights.

The 2021 General Session was unique and historic in many ways. From the Zoom, hybrid to eventually in-person meetings of the Legislature to the management of digital work and lack of in-person interaction with staff, many obstacles were overcome by all who participated. Many of the bills listed have been signed by the Governor, yet some have not. To stay informed or get more information on bills you can find them listed at wyoleg.gov in the 2021 General Session Bills tab.

About Senator Cheri Steinmetz:

Senator Steinmetz represents Goshen, Niobrara, and Weston counties. She is a member of the Appropriations Committee, Select Water Committee, the Select Committee on Legislative Facilities, Technology and Process, and an alternate on the Capital Finance Committee. She previously served on the following Senate committees: Agriculture, State and Public Lands & Water Resources; Transportation, Highways, & Military Affairs when she began serving in the Wyoming State Senate in 2019. Previously, Senator Steinmetz represented House District 5 from 2015 to 2018.

- END -