

# News Release

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## WYOMING SENATE DISTRICT 3

**FOR RELEASE**                      Immediately

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## CONTROVERSIAL BILLS CROSS LEGISLATIVE FLOOR

**CHEYENNE** – Lawmakers debated several headliner bills recently.

On Friday, Jan. 20, the Education Committee heard two important bills, including **SF0114 Constitutional instruction and examination requirements**, which requires constitutional instruction and examinations for students in all grades to be taught once a year. In addition, according to the bill, all students must comply with the same test required of immigrants entering the country. This bill failed on third reading in the Senate.

Senators also heard **SF0117 Parental rights in education**, a bill specifying procedures and requirements for school districts to provide parents notice of information regarding students and the rights of parents to make decisions regarding their children, specifying that school districts cannot prohibit parental notification and involvement in critical decisions involving students. The bill also prohibits classroom instruction about sexual orientation and gender identity in kindergarten-third grade and requires age-appropriate discussions for the grades thereafter. This bill passed third reading in the Senate.

“This has been a bill that has caught the attention of the press and many others, and is sure to bring a lot of controversy as it makes its way to the floor of the State Senate,” Senator Cheri Steinmetz said.

Tuesday, Jan. 24, in the Corporations Committee, Senator Steinmetz presented **SF0105 Utilities-point of consumption and allocation agreements**.

“For close to 100 years, the State of Wyoming has been divided into certified service territories (CSTs), as it pertains to the electric utility’s ability to provide electricity within their territorial boundaries,” Senator Steinmetz said. “The CSTs have been certified and continue to be monitored by the Public Service Commission.

“The problem comes, and the need for the legislation arises, because we currently have no repercussions or legal regulation for a utility who violates or crosses into another service area. This

provides for problems for rural electric corporations who are non-profit corporations being invaded by for-profit corporations. Hopefully, this bill will help that situation.” This bill died in committee.

During a Senate Ag Committee meeting upon adjournment Tuesday, senators discussed three more bills.

“**SF0124 Foreign ownership of agricultural land** will probably be laid back, because it has some issues with its constitutionality,” Senator Steinmetz said. “We also heard **SF0137 Subdivisions-fencing requirements**, which is the bill that replaced the lawful fences bill and placed the subdivision fencing requirements in the county zoning and planning requirements.

“Also up, **SF0134 Right to farm-real estate disclosures**, which requires that a subdivision or vacant land being sold to someone with a small acreage have a real estate disclosure that farming will be taking place and that we are a right-to-farm state.” Senator Steinmetz said. “With that, those are the things on my plate as we move forward into this legislative session.”

Thursday, Jan. 26 was a busy day on the Senate floor.

**SF0136 Property tax relief assessment reduction** was highly debated on the floor.

“It’s a bill I have cosponsored to give property tax relief - it takes the valuation on all other property (real and personal) and Wyoming Statute 39-13-102 from 9.5 percent to 7.5 percent, which would provide some relief for Wyoming citizens across the state,” Senator Steinmetz said. “That being said, we discussed having a sunset date on that provision, so if we see a fluctuation in property and fair-market value, we would have the ability to go back and review that and make sure we’re seeing the funding we need to fund local government, while keeping taxes low and affordable for citizens.”

The Senate also debated **SF0109 Prohibiting chemical abortions**. This bill prohibits abortion pills and abortifacients in the State of Wyoming, with exceptions for rape, incest, and the life of the mother.

In addition, the Senate discussed **SF0134 Right-to-farm real estate disclosures**, which adopts some of the disclosures provided in other states to make sure farming and ranching are protected in the State of Wyoming.

“Thursday, the Senate Ag Committee met upon adjournment to discuss a little bit of water law and beneficial rights, including making storing water for drought contingency a beneficial use in the State of Wyoming,” Senator Steinmetz said. “It is likely we will hold that bill over for an interim topic as we deal with some of the drought mitigation strategies in the Colorado River Basin.”

**Senator Cheri Steinmetz** serves as Chairman of the Agriculture, State and Public Lands and Water Resources Committee and Vice Chairman of the Education Committee. Contact Information: (307)534-5342; e-mail: [cheri.steinmetz@wyoleg.gov](mailto:cheri.steinmetz@wyoleg.gov)

Representative Scott Smith described the current session as a “whirlwind”.

“Having 27 new legislators in the House this session has completely changed the dynamics,” he explained. “The conservative movement is making waves and getting some good legislation through, and we have been able to stop some bad legislation.”

Representative Smith identified victories as stopping ranked-choice voting, which would prohibit hand recounts in elections, as well as ending a bill requiring surveillance cameras in all school crosswalks.

“The ranked-choice voting would have been devastating to allow into our state for municipalities,” Representative Smith said. “Alaska just switched to ranked-choice; it flipped their predominantly republican majority to a democratic-run state in one election cycle.

“With the school crosswalk surveillance bill, its intention was to monitor and hold people accountable to protect our children. Unfortunately, there were many people who were concerned that we would be breaking many constitutional rights and become a surveillance state. The bill would have infringed on our privacy, allowed us to be tracked, to be prosecuted without due process, and a slew of other issues. There was lots of good dialog, but we ultimately stopped it in committee.”

Representative Smith described one of the House’s “defeats” as passing a bill allowing pay raises to the 68th Legislature by \$1,000./year.

“This vote was very interesting. It was defeated on third reading by one vote: 30-31,” Representative Smith said. “Then there was a motion to ‘reconsider’, and we ended up voting again. The vote was overturned 33-28. The process is very interesting and watching people drum up support or help them change their mind is fascinating to observe. I voted against the pay raise for us both times. Now, the bill will go to the Senate, and time will tell what happens in that body with the bill.”

Representative Smith is currently running a bill that has generated some controversy: **HB0146 Lobbying restrictions.**

“Not many laws are put out specifically for the Legislature. The 66th Legislature had three individuals who lost their seats and immediately became lobbyists,” Representative Smith said. “From my perspective, had those individuals been representing the lobbyists or their constituents while serving in the legislature? It is just bad optics, in my opinion.

“We elect people to represent us, they hold a position of authority, and I’d hate to see that authority they had influencing their friends and former colleagues.

“Having a two-year cooling down period takes away any questions of whom they represented during their service.

“It’s all about integrity.”

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More information about the legislative session can be found at [wyoleg.gov](http://wyoleg.gov).

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