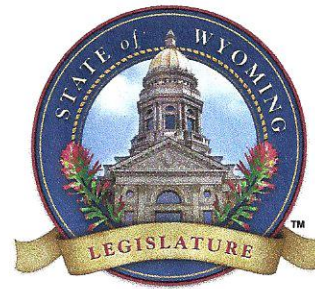


News Release



WYOMING SENATE DISTRICT 3

FOR RELEASE Letter to the Editor for Immediate Release

CONTACT Senator Cheri E. Steinmetz
Senate Agriculture, State & Public Lands & Water Resources, Chairman
Select Water Committee, Chairman

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PRESIDENT OR KING?

Regardless of who serves as President of the Wyoming Senate, it is a position of service, not a kingship.

Recent actions taken by the Wyoming Senate President have led me to address this issue because I voted for him. In an unprecedented manipulation of legislative power, the Wyoming Senate President took it upon himself to notify a committee chairman that he had been removed from his position and subsequently replaced him with another.

This action is specifically prohibited by Senate rule 2-8 which states "Changes in Committee Membership. No change shall be made in any committee except by vote of a majority of the members of the Senate. The President of the Senate may appoint a member to fill any vacancy occurring on any Senate Standing Committee during the interim providing the appointment is made with the advice of the respective majority or minority leader, dependent upon the party in which the vacancy has occurred." The Wyoming Senate ratified both the committee membership and the committee chairmen through formal action on the floor of the Wyoming Senate on January 10, 2023, as reflected in the Senate journal.

The President's reason for taking this authoritarian action? The chairman attended a meeting virtually (as allowed by Senate rules) and not in person.

How did the President inform the current chairman of this action? With a voicemail.

As with any elected leadership office, the President serves at the pleasure of the Senate as a whole. He is elected to carry out the orderly business of the Senate and bound by Senate rules and the formal actions of its members. The Senate President is not granted authority to make arbitrary decisions, his position is one of service and facilitation of the business of the body, not a dictatorship.

The Senate has set a high bar regarding decorum, collegiality, and process. We must refuse to stand by and watch as these long-standing tenants are dismantled. We must publicly object to this action on the basis that the Senate ratified both the committee members and the chairman through a formal process on the floor of the Wyoming Senate and enforce the provisions of Senate rule 2-8. Otherwise, who will the President come after next? Who knows. Even so, we must not allow the voice of one to prevail over the voice of the people who speak through their elected Senators.

We must preserve the process, culture, and the institution of the Wyoming Legislature for our constituents, future generations of Wyoming citizens, and future legislators. It is a misuse of office to singlehandedly move duly elected, Senate confirmed committee members like pawns on a chess board. The State of Wyoming and in particular the Senate must reject this power grab and decry any leader who would use the citizens elected office to build his own kingdom. We must demand more from our elected leaders.

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