

The second week of the 65th Wyoming Legislature concluded on Friday February 21st, 2020. Like the first week, things have been moving at a frenetic pace. As noted previously, there were 398 individual bills filed. Much of this week was devoted to preparation of the state budget.

As of the writing of this document, 284 bills are still active and being considered. WAM began the session tracking 26 House Bills and 14 Senate Bills. Of these, 15 have been defeated and are no longer active.

Tracking Bills Online

The WAM website contains information about all the bills and their status in the legislative process. If you prefer to see this data in the excel format, you can click the excel button and it will format the information into an excel spread sheet. A direct link can be found at <https://wyomuni.org/follow-legislation> .

The attached spreadsheet (found by [clicking here](#)) summarizes this tracking information. It is current as of noon on Friday. The bills that are no longer active are shaded in light blue with a strikethrough on the text. The following paragraphs provide a brief summary of the week's legislative activities.

House Bill 19 – Municipal Franchise Fees

This bill modifies the manner in which cities and towns deal with franchise agreements and franchisees. During the interim, WAM worked with Charter, CenturyLink and other telecommunications companies at the direction of the Joint Corporations Committee to craft livable legislation. The bill has passed the House and will be voted on in the Senate next week. There is still a dispute with Charter regarding the definition of gross revenues. WAM is prepared to fight any amendment should one be introduced.

House Bill 47 – Municipal Option Tax

House Bill 47 authorizes cities and towns to hold city-only sales tax elections. It was developed in conjunction with the Wyoming County Commissioner's Association (WCCA). In addition to allowing for a city only election, it reduces the number of cities needed to get on a sales tax ballot, from two-thirds to 50%. This bill passed the House with one amendment. This amendment would allow cities to hold a city only sales tax only during a general election. WAM is working vigorously to get this amendment removed in the Senate.

House Bill 93 – Increasing Maximum Claim Amount for Governmental Claims

This bill would increase limits of liability for claims against local governments. This bill failed introduction and is dead for the session.

House Bill 124 - Cities and towns-vehicle bid guarantee.

This bill would eliminate the requirement for bid bonds for car and trucks below \$100,000. This bill was requested by one of our WAM member cities. As currently written, the bill would prohibit a city or town from requiring a bid bond on vehicles below \$100,000. WAM has requested an amendment that would allow a city or town to waive the bid bond requirement if

they chose to do so. HB-124 has been introduced, been approved by the House Revenue Committee and will be heard by the House next week.

House Bill 134 – Wyoming Tourism Funding

This bill would impose a 5% statewide lodging tax on short term lodging. Of this amount 3% would be used to fund the department of tourism (effectively taking it out of the general fund). 2% would be sent back to the local governments. The distribution of the local funds would be the same as with current lodging tax legislation, but the use of marketing funds has been slightly expanded. The principal difference between this bill and the one considered last year is that a local government can implement the second 2% by a vote of the town council instead of a vote of the public. This bill passed the House and is ready for Introduction in the Senate.

House Bill 138 – Select Committee on Governmental Consolidation

This bill would establish a Select Committee on Governmental Consolidation. The Committee's charge is to "identify and recommend standards and options for reorganizing, consolidating or reducing the number of school districts, community colleges, counties, cities and legislative districts in the state and the number of legislative committees currently in existence or created by the Wyoming legislature." This bill passed the Revenue Committee and has been placed on the General File in House.

House Bill 183- Municipal Elections Political Parties

This bill would make municipal elections partisan elections. Candidates running for municipal office would need to declare their party affiliation. Cities and towns would need to conduct republican and democratic primaries. Any vacancies would need to be filled with a person of the same party. This bill was heard by the House Corporations Committee and the bill did not pass. Many thanks to all the local elected officials and municipal staff members who contacted their legislators about this bill. Several legislators mentioned the opposition from their local elected officials when voting against the bill.

House Bill 186 – K-12 and Local Government Structural Deficit Repair Act

This bill would increase the state sales tax from 4 to 5 percent if the Legislative Stabilization Reserve Account drops below \$500 million. The local portion of this increase would be distributed in accordance with the Madden Formula. This bill has been introduced in the House and approved by the House Appropriations Committee.

Senate File 22 – Surface Water Drainage

This bill would authorize cities and towns that ability to issue bonds and create an enterprise fund for surface (storm) water improvements. This bill passed the Senate overwhelmingly and is ready for introduction in the House.

Senate File 57- Direct Distribution

The Governor's Recommended Budget contained \$105 million for the biennium (\$52,500,000 per year) for direct distribution. The Joint Appropriations Committee modified the formula to generally increase distributions to smaller towns, while the larger cities will see decreased

revenue. This bill has passed the Senate and is awaiting introduction in the House. [Click here to see how this amendment changes the distribution.](#)

Senate File 108 – Public Employment Retirement

This bill would continue the contribution increase implemented several years ago. It also increases the retirement age for employees hired after the effective date of this legislation. Specifically, it creates a Tier III of employees whose retirement age would be 67. The retirement age for Tier II employees would remain at 65. This bill has passed second reading of the Senate.

Senate File 128 – Unemployment Insurance Compensation Seasonal Workers

This bill would authorize the Department of Workforce Services to designate seasonal employees and provides that unemployment compensation benefits shall not be payable to these employees under specified conditions. This bill has been introduced in the Senate and referred to the Senate Labor Committee.

MRG Funding

The budget approved by the Joint Appropriations Committee included a severe reduction in funding for Mineral Royalty Grants. Much of this funding was diverted to other uses, leaving only \$5 million for emergency grants.

The budget bill was amended in the House to move \$10 million from the Business Ready Community Grant program back into the Mineral Royalty Grant Program. Senator Kost filed a similar amendment in the Senate that failed late Friday afternoon. Also, Representative Sommers introduced an amendment to the House budget that would backfill the \$10 million taken from the BRC account from the General Fund. This amendment passed, and now both house amendments will be considered in conference committee.

Welcome to Cheyenne

For those elected and appointed officials who are coming down to Cheyenne for the session, we want to invite you stop by the WAM office at 315 W. 27th St. just a block down Randell Ave. from the Capitol. The WAM staff meets each morning prior to the start of committee meetings and invites you to join us as we prepare for the legislative day. In addition to free parking, we have coffee, juice, snacks and supplies to make sandwiches.

If you have questions about any legislative issue, please do not hesitate to call Legislative Specialist Bob McLaurin at (307) 413-3483, or Executive Director Dave Fraser at (307) 414-0265.