

News Release



WYOMING SENATE DISTRICT 3

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BILLS ADVANCE WITH TWO WEEKS UNTIL ADJOURNMENT

CHEYENNE – The three bills carried by Senator Cheri Steinmetz (R-Lingle), representing District 3, have passed the Senate – Senate File 97: Born Alive- Infant Means of Care, Senate File 99: Mineral Royalty Grant and Loan Qualification, and Senate File 110: Evaluating the Tax Equivalency of Federal Land in Wyoming. The bills will now move on to the House for consideration.

On Monday, Feb. 17, the Mirror Budget Bill was introduced in both the House and the Senate. At that time, the bill contained appropriations for \$2.9 billion from the General Fund, \$1.8 billion from the School Foundation Program account, \$249 million from the School Capital Construction account, and \$24 million from Water Development 1.

“These are just some of the appropriations included in the budget bill: it authorizes 7,314 full-time positions and 278 part-time positions,” Sen. Steinmetz said

“Out of the budget amendments, two of them were mine and passed,” Sen. Steinmetz said. “One of them had to do with the Department of Corrections. It would give preferential treatment to healthcare facilities and providers within the State of Wyoming, trying to help local providers secure inmate treatment. We will see if the amendment survives conference committee. “

“The second amendment I carried was Borrowing Authority for the Governor in Cases of Emergencies,” Sen. Steinmetz explained. “It would allow the Governor to borrow \$10 million from the Rainy Day fund, or the LSRA, in order to mitigate disasters regarding irrigation districts or other public works across the state. While we know that won’t help us now with the situation Goshen County faced over the summer, hopefully it will help our friends across the state who may be facing similar situations.”

Both amendments passed when each Chamber voted on the third reading of their respective budgets. The Joint Conference Committee continues to meet and discuss differences between the House and Senate positions on the budget.

Sen. Steinmetz reported crossover has occurred, which means the Senate will consider the House bills, and the House will work the Senate files.

“We’re beginning to receive our House bills over on the Senate side,” she said. “We’re also getting initial numbers back from the budgets that we both passed in each respective Chamber. On the Senate side, we are saving \$190 million in the severance tax stream that in years past went into the Permanent Wyoming Mineral Trust Fund. The last few years, we have been using that to pay the bills of the State of Wyoming, because of the budget shortfalls and funding for education. The House proposes to spend that money; the Senate proposes to save it.”

In other legislative news, the Governor, Treasurer, and leadership from both the House and Senate unveiled Senate File 138 and House Bill 249: Investment of State Funds.

“This bill authorizes the process for the state to investigate the purchase of property, assets, and associated interests, specifying requirements for the purchase sources of funding and the distribution of earning income and royalties from purchased assets,” Sen. Steinmetz said. “The bill also creates the property tax reimbursement payment account, and authorizes payments to local governments in lieu of property taxes as specified.

“The legislation sets up a process for the state to consider the purchase of approximately one million surface acres and four million mineral acres from Occidental Petroleum. This land and the minerals were part of the original land grant to the Union Pacific Railroad when they built it across the nation. This parcel contains and follows the UP corridor which includes lands and minerals within Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming. The benefits of the State of Wyoming represent a long-term investment to generate income and benefit public access for hunting, outdoor recreation, wildlife, energy, and other economic interests. In addition to grazing and recreation, there are mineral development opportunities for coal, oil, gas, trona, and potentially some rare earth elements. This creates potential to generate consistent income for the State of Wyoming long into the future. Once more, it puts more Wyoming lands in Wyoming hands. In the Senate, the bill was amended to require a special session to approve or deny the purchase.”

The Senate Ag Committee heard two weed and pest bills, which have passed the Senate. “Both bills deal with our Weed and Pest District,” Sen. Steinmetz explained. “The first would raise the application fee for companies selling products in the State of Wyoming, such as Round-Up, etc. and would raise that fee in order to generate funding for Weed and Pest districts across the state. The second would allow a process to access property to deal with invasive weeds and pests and provide a process by which the board could collaboratively proceed to take care of the invasive species with uncooperative or absentee landowners.

“Senate Ag also passed the Omnibus Water Bill and the Emergency Account Funding Water Bill which sets up an emergency account for irrigation districts with an appropriation of \$5 million and designates Carey Act funds to the account until it reaches \$10 million. It also

allows for participation in a voluntary fund. Funds would be distributed on a 25 percent grant and 75 percent loan basis.”

This week, the Senate will vote on confirmations of the Governor's appointments to various boards and commissions across the State. These are important decisions that should not be taken lightly, Sen. Steinmetz said.

"I was honored to attend the Republican Party event in Cheyenne to celebrate Women's Suffrage. It was also wonderful to meet with the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation and the Young Farmers and Ranchers and congratulate them on 100 years!

"I always look forward to meeting with our county commissioners and county clerks when they come down for their meetings in Cheyenne," Sen. Steinmetz said. "Keep on watching the legislative session. We're moving quickly and getting a lot of work done on behalf of the state. We appreciate all of you."

About Senator Cheri Steinmetz:

Sen. Steinmetz represents Goshen, Niobrara, and Weston counties. She is a member of the following Senate committees: Agriculture, State and Public Lands & Water Resources; Transportation, Highways, & Military Affairs; and the Select Committee on Legislative Facilities, Technology and Process. She began serving in the Wyoming State Senate in 2019. Previously, Sen. Steinmetz represented House District 5 from 2015 to 2018. More information may be found at wyoleg.gov.

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