

News Release



WYOMING SENATE DISTRICT 3

FOR RELEASE Immediately

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2020 SESSION COMES TO A CLOSE

CHEYENNE –The Legislative session is drawing to a close and everyone is eager to go home. “As you are probably aware, the legislative session is winding down,” according to District 3 Sen. Cheri Steinmetz “We do have a hard stop on Friday, which means we’re out of the Constitutionally-allotted days for the legislative session. However, we hope to adjourn on Thursday, March 12th.”

On Friday, March 6th, the House and Senate Appropriations Committee came to an agreement on the budget. The House and the Senate Appropriations Committee worked on the budget for several weeks with one of the primary points of contention being the funding of unfilled teaching positions, which the Senate calls “ghost teachers” in the budget - approximately \$15 million including insurance benefits. The final compromise split the funding in half. The Senate ultimately passed the budget, however, is uncomfortable with the level of spending as seen by the final vote on the budget. The budget failed concurrence until two senators changed their vote in order to avoid a special session.

On Wednesday, March 11, SF97 Born Alive- Infant Means of Care passed the House and is now headed to the Governor’s desk.

“I am pleased my colleagues agree that once a child is born, all rights apply equally under the law,” Sen. Steinmetz said.

“Unfortunately, my other bills died on the House side this year. My footnote in the budget was approved, which allows the State to study the fair taxable value of federal land in Wyoming in order to ensure proper PILT (payment in lieu of taxes) to our local governments. While this is just the first step in the process, I am pleased we will be working on this project.” she added.

HB81 Emergency Water Projects Account also passed the Legislature. The bill sets aside \$5 million for irrigation emergencies.

The Legislature passed the following bills from the Ag Committees interim work:

HB0036 Pesticide registration fee.

This bill increases the annual pesticide registration fee from \$90.00 to \$125.00. Funds from the fee are deposited into the special natural resource account for weed and pest programs.

HB0038 Weed and pest amendments.

This bill revises procedures related to the ability of weed and pest districts to enter lands that may be infested with weeds or pests for purposes of investigation and remediation.

SF0041 Animal damage management funding.

This bill revises procedures related to animal damage management funding. The bill increases the amount of funding that the Animal Damage Management Board will request from the Game and Fish Commission. The bill also clarifies the entities that are authorized to request funding and establishes an optional fee for animal damage management funding. The bill repeals provisions related to the wildlife damage management stamp.

SF0081 Livestock brand administration.

This bill amends provisions related to the rerecording of brands and authorizes the extension of the rerecording period for up to 100 years. The bill repeals the existing statute that provides for permanently recorded brands

"There have been three bills for conservation accounts allowing the Department of Transportation to be able to accept donations for wildlife crossings across the state," Sen. Steinmetz said. "WYDOT is working in conjunction with the Game and Fish Department on this project. The project has a lot of momentum and public support and will allow voluntary donations when you get your driver's license, hunting licenses, conservation stamps and at some travel terminals across the state."

House Agriculture heard the last of their bills on Wednesday, March 4, including House Bill 88: Livestock Board Investigators, which would add another investigator to the Livestock Board.

"As you'll recall, we deleted four positions during the budget cuts in 2016, and now we're adding back another investigator to help with the County Sheriff Program that we stood up in place of the previous livestock investigation program," Sen. Steinmetz said. "This is a grant program in conjunction with the usage of the program by county sheriffs. This HB83 provides one more training officer to help with brand inspection practices, and livestock investigations. So far, working with the county sheriffs to stand up this program has been well received, and we appreciate the local support."

House Bill 99: Animal Reimbursement Program, allows funds from the Animal Disease Account to be utilized for brucellosis quarantines and destruction of animals within the surveillance area.

House Bill 142: Animal Marketing Funds Processing Plants is a bill that allows the funds remaining in the ENDOW account - approximately \$1.8 million set aside by Gov. Mead and

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the legislature that approved the ENDOW program - and this would go in and utilize those funds to allow a grant or loan process up to \$1 million for a mid-sized meat-processing plant. “The bill addresses plants that would process 50 head a day,” Sen. Steinmetz said. “It for out-of-state and out-of-country production, in order that it doesn’t compete with our local processors who are doing a great job serving our communities.”

On Friday, Feb. 28., the Lodging Tax Bill, or Tourism Account Bill, passed the Senate. “This bill actually increases the Lodging Tax,” Sen. Steinmetz explained. “You’d still have your 2 percent local option, but then on top of it, there’s a 3 percent statewide tax that goes to fund the Department of Tourism - and on top of that, there’s a permanent local tax of another 2 percent, which is not approved by the voters. I will not support a bill that takes the right to vote on a tax away from the voters.”

“In the 2020 session the Local Sales and Use Tax did passed both houses heavily amended with new language of only 50% of the municipalities having to agree to place an issue on the ballot with approval of the County Commissioners for a municipality to enact a municipal tax. The only exception is when the county has already enacted the sixth-penny, then the municipality may put on the ballot without a vote of the County Commissioners. Ultimately, if a tax is proposed, it will be up for a vote of the people in order to implement a municipal tax.”

“It has been an interesting session. We have made landmark decisions regarding land purchases, taxes, wildlife, and passed a \$2.9 billion budget with \$1.8 billion going to K-12 Education. We will be facing deficits coming into the next session. I will continue to look for ways to tighten our belt rather than raise taxes.”

Sen. Steinmetz concluded her report by thanking the public for its involvement in the local and state government.

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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