

News Release



WYOMING SENATE DISTRICT 3

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CRITICAL BILLS STUCK IN SPEAKER'S DRAWER

CHEYENNE – Several bills remained stuck in the Speaker of the House's drawer last week.

Tuesday, Feb. 14 was the 25th day of the 2023 legislative session.

"As you know, the Senate has continued to hear House bills – unfortunately, some of the good Senate files we've sent over to the House are now being held in the speaker's drawer," Senator Cheri Steinmetz said.

"HB0175 Excused absence-State Fair events was heard in the Senate Education Committee Monday, which requires boards of trustees for school districts to modify excused absences for events associated with the State Fair and by nationally recognized organizations and clubs that promote youth agricultural education," Senator Steinmetz said. "Hopefully, HB175 will help our 4-H and FFA participants to ensure that they don't have unexcused absences from participating in their events." This bill passed the Senate and will head to the governor's desk.

Tuesday night, the Senate Agriculture State and Public Lands and Water Resources Committee met upon adjournment.

"We finished taking up **HB0022 State land lease deficiencies-cure process**," Senator Steinmetz said. "As you recall, this is a bill that basically takes care of communication between the State Land office and lessees during the renewal process. The bill outlines a process of deadlines for communication and transparency in the renewal of leases while providing for a process to address deficient lease applications rather than non-renewal of leases."

HB0017 State lands-grazing of non-owned livestock provides for non-owned livestock that are not a sublease to be run on state leases without voiding the contract.

"HB0180 Brucellosis testing notification requirements require the Department of Agriculture to promulgate rules for a communication program designed to notify producers and those in the affected area about non-negative tests," Senator Steinmetz said. "That should be a good bill to increase communication."

Also, **HB0188 Wolf depredation compensation** – this is an act relating to gray wolves and providing a compensation program in the Department of Ag, with the coordination of the Game and Fish Department. It sets aside \$300,000 for depredation payments for those seeking remedy for gray wolf depredation.

“We will continue to keep an eye on the bills being held in the speaker’s desk,” Senator Steinmetz said. “We’re hopeful that they will move soon. We put a lot of hard work into those bills, and they’ve been bills that the people of the State of Wyoming asked for regarding school choice and protection of our children, and other important areas, such as ESG protections for the citizens of the State of Wyoming. We’ll keep you posted.

“Tuesday, Feb. 14, the Lingle-Fort Laramie High School Student Council and their sponsor Erin Estes visited us at the Wyoming State Capitol. I enjoyed spending part of my lunch break with them to discuss the workings of the legislature and policy issues.” **(picture included)**

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

“The bill I received the most communication on last week was **SF0143 Wyoming Freedom Scholarship Act** - referred to as ESA (education savings account),” Representative Scott Smith said. “This bill would set up savings accounts for each child in the state for educational purposes.

“This bill would put \$6,000/year into the account, and the funds would follow the child on your choice of education. No matter where you decide to educate your child, the funds would be made available to public, private, religious, charter, or even homeschool.

“I believe that this would create competition in our education sector, and competition breeds higher standards in our education systems. This program would not be funded through our county or municipal taxes.

“This program would pay out quarterly, and homeschool parents would be allowed to submit their receipts for expenses on educational purposes like textbooks or a computer, etc.,” Representative Smith explained. “Private school parents would be able to submit receipts for reimbursement for tuition costs. I believe that this would open up educational options that are currently not afforded by some parents.”

As of Tuesday, Feb. 14, this bill made it through the process of the Senate. The bill was introduced to the House Feb. 2 and has stayed in the desk of the Speaker of the House since that time.

“People have asked me, ‘How do we get this bill moving again?’” Representative Smith said. “First, Contact Speaker of the House Albert Sommers on his website and ask him to refer the bill to a committee.

“Second, depending on the committee that it gets assigned to, you then would have to contact the committee chairman and ask them to go through the bill during a committee meeting.

“Thirdly, once the bill is assigned to be heard before the committee, contact the committee members and ask them to support the bill and vote to bring it before the body to be debated. This is a perfect time for you to testify before the committee and share why this bill would be beneficial and why you either support or reject the bill.

“Fourthly, once the bill comes before the body, then reach out to the entire body and ask for their support.”

You can follow the status of the bill and find the contact information of the committee members on the Wyoming Legislature’s website: www.wyoleg.gov

“Thank you for taking part in the process,” Representative Smith said.

Representative Scott Smith serves on the Transportation, Highways, and Military Affairs Committee. Contact Information: (307)575-3742; e-mail: Scott.Smith@wyoleg.gov

On Monday, Feb. 13, Representative Allen Slagle reported lawmakers were now on the back half of the 2023 legislative session.

“For committees this morning, that you might find interesting, in Senate Labor and Health they will be hearing **HB0081 Hospital supplemental payments-statutory fix**. Also, **HB0119 Medical prescriptions-off label purposes** – this bill allows for providers’ freedom to use medications for uses not on the label, as has been the practice until before COVID. Then, there are two other bills they will be looking at, as time permits.

“On the House side, judiciary will be hearing SF0056 Prohibiting travel across private land for hunting purposes, along with three other bills.”

Starting at 10 a.m. Monday morning in the House, lawmakers had eight bills for second reading; and 14 bills for third reading, several of which Representative Slagle expected to generate debate, including **SF0024 Financial exploitation of vulnerable adults**.

“Which is something that banks already do, but this bill allows them to put a five-day hold on funds until things are figured out,” Representative Slagle said.

SF0026 Psychology interjurisdictional compact – this bill allows for psychologists to practice in any state that is a part of the compact.

“However, there should be some concerns as to the controls taken away from the individual states once you enter the compact,” Representative Slagle said.

SF0028 Livestock infectious disease control-tribal inclusion – this allows for producers on the reservation to participate in the state livestock contagious and infectious reportable disease testing and containment programs and reimbursements.

SF0033 Defining aircraft for purposes of hunting prohibitions – this bill adds the definition of aircraft to the current statute.

On general file, representatives had several bills to be introduced.

Upon adjournment, the Senate Transportation heard three bills, with the final bill: **HB0154 Permanent vehicle registration.**

Thursday, Feb. 16, lawmakers voted to concur on the budget.

“I voted against it,” Representative Slagle said. “In my opinion, we were spending way too much money on things we didn’t need to spend on, and not putting enough away in savings. However, this is way too complicated to try and explain [here] and will have to be done in person – hopefully, the town hall after the session.”

In committees, the House Judiciary Committee reconsidered **SF0056 Prohibiting travel across private land for hunting purposes.** Public comment is already closed, as it failed in committee, 5-4, earlier this week. Appropriations worked on **SF0096 Omnibus water bill planning and administration** – continued from yesterday.

“Today on second reading, we have seven bills,” Representative Slagle said. “The most interesting being **SF0061 Legislator per diem** – changing per diem to a more federal-type standard. I’m not sure where I stand on this bill. If it looks like it’s going to be a great increase in per diem, then I am probably against it.

“SF0102 Food freedom act amendments bill gives a little more freedom to the Food Freedom Act we already have. I am for this bill.

“SF0178 Mountain lion pursuit seasons – which allows hunters to pursue mountain lion with a permit, even when the season is not open for them to be killed. It’s kind of similar to catch-and-release for fishing.”

Thursday, representatives had eight bills for second reading that they saw on third Friday, including SF0016 State employee moving expenses.

“We’ve been getting a number of emails opposing this bill, and I am also leaning that direction,” Representative Slagle said.

SF0021 High occupancy vehicle lanes – this is a bill trying to fix an issue between Jackson and Teton Village without building a four-lane highway.

SF0029 Brucellosis management updates – this bill cleans up brucellosis-management protocol in the statute.

“We also have **SF0084 Education-model student attendance policies,**” Representative Slagle said. “This is a bill I have gotten some feedback on and is amended – people aren’t liking it.”

On general file Friday, lawmakers again had several bills to be introduced.

“It’s great getting feedback from all of you,” Representative Slagle said.

Representative Allen Slagle serves on the Agriculture, State and Public Lands and Water Resources Committee. Contact information: (307)306-7384; e-mail: allen.slagle@wyoleg.gov

More information about the legislative session can be found at wyoleg.gov.

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