

News Release



WYOMING SENATE DISTRICT 3

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SESSION WRAPS UP

CHEYENNE – Lawmakers finished up their annual legislative work Friday, March 3 with several highlights and lowlights for the 2023 session. Attached you will find the official summary provided by the Legislative staff.

“March 1 marked the 35th day of the 2023 Wyoming Legislative Session,” Senator Cheri Steinmetz said. “We had our last bills on the third reading list, and so we dealt with a few bills - the remaining ones that were still in the senate, including **HB0004 Medicaid 12-month postpartum coverage**, which passed 14-16. We had **HB0171 State land leases** and that passed by 28 votes in the senate. This bill was amended to a 30-day notice requirement when state lands is going to lease for purposes other than agriculture they must notify people in the community and adjacent landowners.

“We also heard **HB0222 Colorado River Advisory Committee** – that passed 29 votes strong in the senate, and that will set up a full-time employee in the state engineer’s office to deal with Colorado River issues, and a committee that includes some legislators that to deal with basin issues and advise the governor and the legislature.

“Finally, the headliner we’ve been working on for some time now, **HB0152 Life is a human right act**, this bill passed 25 votes strong in the senate on third reading. The House concurred. We are still waiting for the Governor to act on this bill. His deadline is March 18th at 5 p.m. HB0152 recognizes babies as human beings and gives them all the rights that are guaranteed in our Constitution. The bill also makes clear that abortion is not healthcare.”

According to an official release from the Governor’s office Friday, March 17, “Governor Mark Gordon took further steps to implement a pro-life policy agenda when he signed a prohibition on chemical abortions today. At the same time, he allowed **HB0152 Life is a human right act** to go into law. But he expressed concern that this new law will only result in a new lawsuit, which will delay any resolution to the constitutionality of the abortion ban in Wyoming”.

“Some of the chief legislation of the session was the two water bills: **HB0093 Omnibus water bill planning** and **SF0096 Omnibus water bill construction**,” Senator Steinmetz said. “The

senate position was that we wanted the board of control to be funded out of the general fund in the state engineer's budget, rather than out of water development funds, because that reduces how many funds are available for municipal, irrigation and other water projects across the state."

"**SF0137 Subdivision fencing requirements** passed and was signed by the Governor. This bill rewrote in the ag committee and had to be an individual bill, as we brought it back through dealing with subdivision fences and responsibilities of landowners and how we move forward with that, since there are so many subdivisions coming up across the state."

The Governor's official press release on St. Patrick's Day also stated Governor Gordon exercised his line-item veto authority on the following bills: **HB0195 American rescue plan act appropriations-amendments**, **SF0146 State funded capital construction**, and **SF0096 Omnibus water bill-planning and administration**.

In addition to finding information on the legislature, residents can track governor's vetoes at wyoleg.gov.

Senator Cheri Steinmetz serves as Chairman of the Agriculture, State and Public Lands and Water Resources Committee, Chairman of the Select Water Committee and Vice Chairman of the Education Committee. Contact Information: (307)534-5342; e-mail: cheri.steinmetz@wyoleg.gov

Wednesday, March 1 was the last day for third reading of bills.

"It's been an interesting week," Representative Allen Slagle said. "We've spent a fair amount of time on **SF0151 Wyoming prescription drug transparency act**. This bill has gone from being stripped in committee to half of what originally was there, to getting most of everything put back in like the original. And then yesterday, trying to strip stuff out of it again. It actually ended up fairly good. It will be interesting today to see if on third reading we can hold it together so it actually protects our pharmacists so that they can continue to make money and serve our small towns and communities.

"Another bill that we've been working on pretty hard is **SF0109 Prohibiting chemical abortions** – that bill, right now as it stands coming out of second reading, is a strong, anti-abortion bill and really protects our moms and young babies.

"The other interesting bill that we had on concurrence yesterday was **HB0017 State lands grazing of non-owned livestock**. That bill wasn't quite as strong coming back from the senate as it left the house, but it still gives better protections to our state land lessees over what we have in the current statute.

"It's just we got a lot of bills to go through on third reading today. Yesterday, we had a number of rule committee meetings because people were challenging the germaneness of amendments to bills, as a lot of amendments are being brought to try to get in stuff and the bills are coming through now that had been killed or died earlier. It's making for a tougher time to debate these bills and get them through.

"It's great getting feedback from you, and we will continue to try to respond to emails and phone calls as time permits."

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

Representative Scott Smith stated there are many interesting things to highlight from the final week of this year's legislative session.

"First, the legislature voted against the governor's line-item vetoes in the budget amendments," Representative Smith said. "Most of the vetoes that he proposed were taking sideboards off from the budget items. So, for instance, there were several new hire positions in different departments, he just wanted to hire people for any purpose and not for the intended request - and that also goes for spending items designated to the university for specific building construction projects - the governor removed the projects but left the funding open to any purpose. The legislature was able to unify and veto his vetoes."

Representative Smith said he believes the "biggest problem with the legislature is there is a lack of integrity and any moral compass that guides them".

"While we were debating **SF0174 Wyoming Charter School Authorizing Board**, an individual brought forth an amendment to try to kill the bill. Another individual called a point of order that the amendment was unconstitutional and requested the rules committee. Upon the debate of the rules committee, the acting chairman said the chair decided the amendment was constitutional and was time to debate the amendment. One of the rules committeemen got up and asked the chairman to clarify the vote of the rules committee. The chairman deflected three times and wouldn't answer until pressured for the truth. Finally, it came to our attention that the rules committee had decided that the amendment was unconstitutional, and the vote was 10-3. Then the chairman ruled against the committee and wanted to proceed with the unconstitutionality of the amendment. Then the body had to vote to overrule the chairman. After all was said and done, the bringer of the amendment withdrew his unconstitutional amendment.

"Another egregious stunt the Appropriations committee pulled to keep the body in the dark is there was a bill that had to go to concurrence - which is the house and the senate send representatives to meet to hash out differences in amendments to a bill. Upon the report to the body, the presenter left out the senate stripped out two entire pages of the bill. That might be good to know before voting. But this is just the surface of the games that are being played by the legislature."

Representative Smith stated there have been many serious bills defeated that would have protected the rights of the people of Wyoming.

"In the last few days, they have been laughing and joking about the best ways to kill the good bills," Representative Smith said. "**SF0101 Wyoming Legal Tender Act Amendments** was intended to grant our state treasurer the opportunity to purchase and hold physical gold and silver to hedge against inflation. This bill was gutted and had amendment after amendment as a joke to kill this bill. One example was to have Wyoming spend millions to build their own Fort Knox to hold the gold which was not needed. First, the capital has its own vaults - but secondly, there is a new mint moving into the state so that we could outsource the holdings and testing of the precious metals.

“Watch YouTube of any of the debates and you will see the complete disregard for what is best for the people of the state of Wyoming. Many legislators are more interested in protecting businesses and special interest groups instead of what really matters to the people.”

Representative Smith concluded his report with a summary of the 2023 legislative session.

“We were not able to provide property tax relief, we couldn’t protect our people’s freedom of choice for medical freedom, we couldn’t stop pornography in our children’s schools across the state, we couldn’t stop child abuse by stopping gender re-assignment surgeries, and we couldn’t protect people from forced microchipping from employers. That’s just to list a few.

“What we did accomplish is to take a \$1.7 billion surplus of our tax dollars and spend it. We grew the government with that spending and numerous positions from many of the different departments. You will hear people say that we saved \$3 for every dollar we spent. One perspective is the interest on the savings does not cover the cost of the residual expenses that the legislature managed to increase. The annual interest plus the annual added expense is still a deficit of \$60 million.

“It’s too early to know if we have protected life by stopping chemical abortions in our state, because we don’t know if our governor is going to sign the bill.

“The Wyoming Freedom Caucus and I have tried to do our best to represent the true Wyoming conservative values.”

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

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

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