

# News Release

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## WYOMING SENATE DISTRICT 3

FOR RELEASE                      Immediately  
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### **Senator Steinmetz issues first legislative update for 2026 budget session**

The 2026 Budget Session is now underway in Cheyenne, and Wyoming citizens deserve a clear update on where the process stands, what decisions lie ahead, and what these decisions mean for taxpayers, families, and communities across the state.

The session began with the Republican caucus, where legislators heard from Wyoming's statewide elected officials and discussed priorities for the session. The Legislature formally convened the following morning and immediately began reviewing major issues, including education recalibration and the state budget.

Because this is a budget session, the rules governing legislation are different from a general session. Any bill that is not directly related to the budget must receive a two-thirds vote simply to be introduced and referred to committee. That higher threshold reflects the constitutional intent that budget sessions remain focused primarily on the finances of the state.

This year, I brought forward three bills that did not receive the two-thirds vote required for introduction in this budget session. These measures addressed energy policy and accountability, reforms to the Wyoming Supreme Court selection and qualifications process, and closing loopholes that allow tax breaks for non-government housing projects. While disappointing, it is not unusual in a budget session for policy bills to fall short of the higher introduction threshold, and work will continue to refine these proposals for future consideration.

In addition, a bill that advanced through the Select Water Committee also failed introduction in the House. That bill would have clarified that the destruction of water molecules in the production of hydrogen cannot be designated as a beneficial use of water under Wyoming law. Water is one of Wyoming's most precious resources, and how beneficial use is defined has long-term consequences for agriculture, municipalities, and future generations.

Another major issue before the Legislature is education recalibration, which Wyoming is required by court precedent to review approximately every five years. Recalibration has often been delayed, and when that happens, taxpayer dollars are wasted on litigation—school districts using taxpayer funds to sue the Legislature, and the Legislature using taxpayer funds to defend itself. That outcome serves neither Wyoming citizens nor students.

The recalibration bill initially failed in the House, but has been reintroduced in the Senate, and the work continues. Legislators are listening carefully to concerns from school boards, superintendents, educators, and parents across Wyoming. Transparency and collaboration are essential as the process moves forward.

One of the concerns being raised repeatedly is literacy and classroom funding. Some schools across Wyoming are thriving and producing highly literate, well-rounded students, while others are struggling. When schools cannot adequately compensate teachers or direct sufficient resources into the classroom, every student in that system is

affected. For that reason, the Legislature is examining options such as categorical grants designed to ensure funding reaches classroom teachers and students more directly.

Turning to the state budget itself, the first reading of the budget bill occurred last week. The first reading is primarily an introductory explanation of what the budget contains. Most legislators have already reviewed the budget in detail, and many have gone through it with a fine-tooth comb.

This week, the Legislature will move to the second and third readings, which are the stages where amendments may be offered and debated. These readings are where significant policy decisions are often made—decisions about how the State of Wyoming is funded, what services are essential moving forward, what spending policies should be, and what constitutes a responsible, right-sized level of government for Wyoming and the next governor coming into office.

It is also important for Wyoming citizens to understand how the budget process works. The governor submits a recommended budget to the Legislature. For this biennium, Governor Mark Gordon proposed a budget of approximately \$11.1 to \$11.13 billion in total spending across all funds, including federal funds and transfers.

The Joint Appropriations Committee (JAC) then reviews that proposal in detail, holds hearings, and amends the budget. The version reported out of committee reflects legislative priorities and fiscal analysis and becomes the budget debated by the full Legislature.

The fiscal note for the current general government appropriations bill shows that the JAC proposal includes approximately \$3.24 billion from the General Fund, along with funding from multiple other accounts, including approximately \$2.25 billion from the School Foundation Program Account and about \$2.16 billion in federal funds, among other funding sources.

Additionally, separating certain items—such as local government funding and capital construction—into standalone legislation reduces the size of the main budget bill significantly. Overall, legislative changes reduce the governor's proposed budget by roughly \$1 billion, with approximately \$400 million in direct savings to the state. Some of these reductions are controversial and will be weighed carefully in the coming days.

The budget still has two readings to go, and amendments will continue to shape the final product. Wyoming citizens with specific questions or concerns about the budget are encouraged to contact their senators and representatives. Public input matters, and it helps guide the decisions that will shape state government and priorities for the coming biennium.

Throughout the session, Wyoming citizens continue to make their expectations clear: government must be careful with taxpayer dollars, transparent in its actions, and focused on core responsibilities. Wyoming taxpayers work hard, and they rightly expect their government to do the same.

Wyoming's shared goal should always be clear: to serve our family, friends and neighbors well; to ensure good-paying, meaningful jobs for Wyoming educators and workers; and to maintain a Wyoming government that is efficient, transparent, and accountable to Wyoming citizens.

As always, Wyoming citizens can follow bills, watch committee meetings, and stay informed by visiting [www.wyoleg.gov](http://www.wyoleg.gov).

**About Senator Cheri Steinmetz:**

Senator Steinmetz represents Goshen, Niobrara, and Weston counties.

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