

# News Release

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## WYOMING SENATE DISTRICT 3

FOR RELEASE                      Immediately  
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### **2026 Budget Session Recap: Key Legislation and Challenges for Wyoming**

#### **Legislative Update from Senator Cheri Steinmetz**

The Wyoming Legislature concluded its work for the 2026 Budget Session on March 11, when lawmakers returned to consider potential veto overrides. While several bills were vetoed by the governor, none of the vetoes were overridden by the Legislature, except for some of the line items on the budget bill. The governor's budget was basically unaltered in the end with additions from the Legislature in funding for senior centers and developmental disability waivers.

This session was one of the most hectic legislative sessions I have been a part of. Throughout the session, numerous ancillary issues arose that complicated the legislative process and consumed a great deal of time and attention. Unfortunately, the Senate's handling of the final day of Committee of the Whole was particularly disappointing. Rather than working through the final measures efficiently, the Senate took extended breaks and ultimately failed to address approximately 10 remaining bills before adjournment.

This was a disservice to Wyoming citizens across the state who brought these issues forward to be considered by the Legislature. Several of the bills left unaddressed dealt with important topics such as parental rights, sexually explicit materials in libraries, election integrity, and Second Amendment protections. These are serious issues that deserved full debate and consideration. The Senate's inability to manage the schedule in a way that allowed these bills to be heard fell short of the level of professionalism Wyoming citizens should expect from their Legislature. Responsibility for managing the daily floor schedule rests with Senate leadership, particularly the Majority Floor Leader.

Despite those frustrations, the Legislature remained in session through the veto window, which is an important constitutional safeguard. Remaining in session ensures that the executive branch cannot simply wait the full 15 days to veto or line-item veto legislation without the Legislature having an opportunity to review and respond. Maintaining that balance between the legislative and executive branches is an important part of responsible government.

The Second Amendment Preservation Act builds on legislation we passed several years ago that had the support of county sheriffs and police chiefs across the state. This version of the bill became more controversial, but I heard clearly from constituents who asked me to support it, and I did so throughout the process.

Going forward, however, any effort to revisit this legislation must involve closer collaboration with law enforcement. We must ensure that we are supporting both the Second Amendment and the men and women who protect our communities. Our law enforcement officers are among the strongest supporters of the Second

Amendment, and I deeply appreciate the work they do every day. Their voices must be at the forefront of the conversation if this issue comes back before the legislature.

During this session, Governor Mark Gordon signed a large number of bills into law addressing issues ranging from education and public safety to economic development and healthcare. Several measures stood out as key accomplishments of the 2026 session.

One of the most significant bills passed this year was the **Human Heartbeat Act (HB0126)**. This legislation protects unborn children once a heartbeat is detected. During debate in the labor health committee and then on the floor of the Senate, I successfully introduced and passed an amendment that provides an important legal safeguard. My amendment ensures that if the Human Heartbeat Act is enjoined by a court or found unconstitutional, Wyoming's **2022 viability abortion law will automatically go back into effect**. This provision prevents the state from falling into a legal vacuum and ensures that meaningful protections for unborn children remain in place regardless of ongoing legal challenges.

Another major bill was the **Stem Cell Freedom Act (SF0048)**, which promotes medical innovation by protecting access to ethical stem cell therapies and ensuring patients and physicians have greater freedom to pursue emerging treatments.

Several important public safety measures were also passed. The Legislature enhanced criminal penalties for individuals who distribute **fentanyl to minors**, addressing one of the most dangerous aspects of the opioid crisis. Lawmakers also passed legislation prohibiting **sex offenders from residing near child-care facilities**, strengthening protections for Wyoming's children.

In addition, lawmakers approved legislation addressing concerns about **non-English speaking commercial truck drivers (HB0032)**. This measure reinforces federal and state requirements that commercial drivers be able to read and communicate in English to ensure roadway safety and clear communication with law enforcement and safety personnel.

Public safety infrastructure was also strengthened through **SF0032, the 911 funding bill**, which provides immediate support for Wyoming's emergency call centers and funds a study to transition the state toward **Next Generation 911 technology**.

Education and student opportunity were also a focus this year. The Legislature approved an increase to the **Hathaway Scholarship awards**, helping more Wyoming students pursue higher education within the state. Another important measure ensures that **homeschooled and non-traditional students can participate in school activities**, providing equal access to athletics and extracurricular opportunities.

The Legislature also passed legislation protecting the integrity of high school sports by ensuring they remain **amateur athletic activities rather than professionalized programs**.

Several measures supported Wyoming's workforce and first responders. Legislation addressing **firefighter retirement plans, paid leave, and hazard pay** was enacted to recognize the critical service firefighters provide to Wyoming communities.

Local governments also received important support this session. The Legislature approved legislation that **solidifies local government distributions through sales tax revenue**, giving cities and counties a more stable and predictable funding source for essential services.

Healthcare policy was another significant area of work. Wyoming passed legislation allowing the state to participate in the **Rural Health Transformation Program**, designed to strengthen rural healthcare systems and

improve access to care in underserved communities. Lawmakers also passed legislation regulating **kratom products**, a substance with opioid-like effects, to protect public health and safety.

Water and infrastructure issues were addressed through the **Omnibus Water Bills**, which continue Wyoming's long-standing investment in water development and infrastructure projects critical to agriculture and rural communities.

Election integrity and transparency were also strengthened this session. New laws allow the public to observe **voting machine testing procedures** and establish a **hand-count comparison process for elections**, providing an additional audit mechanism to ensure voting systems are functioning correctly.

Finally, legislation was enacted requiring **greater transparency in hospital pricing**, helping Wyoming citizens better understand healthcare costs.

While the governor signed most legislation into law, several bills were vetoed or allowed to become law without his signature. These included the repeal of the Strategic Investments and Projects Account, amendments to the Second Amendment Protection Act, and legislation regarding union transparency and dues withdrawal. Additionally, the governor exercised a line-item veto on portions of the state budget.

Overall, the 2026 session addressed a wide range of issues affecting Wyoming citizens—from protecting life and strengthening public safety, to improving education, healthcare access, and government transparency.

More information about bills from the 2026 session can be found at [wyoleg.gov](http://wyoleg.gov) or the governor's website at [governor.wyo.gov](http://governor.wyo.gov).

**About Senator Cheri Steinmetz:**

Senator Steinmetz represents Goshen, Niobrara, and Weston counties.

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