

The budget session of the 64<sup>th</sup> legislature kicked off this week with a bang. There are 254 bills filed between the two houses at this time, and it is commonly understood that there are loads more in the hopper. The staff of the Legislative Service Office continues to be challenged with the perfect storm of new and inexperienced staff, loss of long-time advisors, and a record number of new legislators, and bills are not coming out as quickly as in the past. Legislators have a tough job – one that requires careful thought and courage to make the tough decisions.

The big issues? K-12 education for one. Coal Lease Bonus dollars are exhausted – that means no money to build new schools. The School Foundation Program (funds operations for the schools) is set to be more than \$800 million in the hole over the next two years. The prison is literally crumbling to the ground. Local assessed valuations are dramatically lower and sales and use taxes are also on the decline. Counties and cities and towns are feeling it, higher education is feeling it, agencies are feeling it – are average Wyomingites feeling it? Is it time to tap into the rainy day fund, is it time to tighten belts even more, or is it time to raise taxes? Perhaps a little bit of each...

Governor Mead gave his annual State of the State address on Wednesday, January 11<sup>th</sup> and told legislators, “It’s time to spend the rainy days funds”. He highlighted the \$1.5 billion in the Legislative Stabilization Reserve Account (LSRA, otherwise known as the “rainy day fund”), and the \$7.4 billion in the Permanent Wyoming Mineral Trust Fund (PMTWF), and praised the legislature’s “conservative budgeting and savings” to get us there. With regard to the LSRA, the Governor very plainly and explicitly told legislators, “It’s raining”. He stressed the need for more definition surrounding the fund and its use.

The Governor also spoke about what makes Wyoming a place to grow business – primarily our low tax structure. Yet he stressed that we cannot stop working to not only keep Wyoming folks in the state, but also attract new folks to Wyoming. He spoke of the ENDOW Initiative - Economically Needed Diversity Options for Wyoming – and how that \$1.5 million can work to build a partnership between new business and the community colleges to train a needed workforce.

He did mention several request of this legislature:

- \$5 million to local governments
- \$2.5 for the ENDOW (\$1.5M for the program and \$1M for operations)
- \$500,000 for the University of Wyoming science initiative
- \$425,000 for University of Wyoming enrollment
- \$100,000 for tribal liaisons

[Click here to watch Governor Mead’s State of the State Address](#)

As for the January CREG (Consensus Revenue Estimating Group), we expect it to come out next week. The Joint Appropriations Committee is still hearing agency budgets and will have agency call-backs early next week. They will then mark-up the Governor’s budget and start hearing bills.

House – 51 Republicans, 9 Democrats

Senate – 27 Republicans, 3 Democrats

## **BILLS OF INTEREST THIS WEEK – SEE THE BILL TRACKING SHEET**

**[HB 9 – STUDENT OWNERSHIP AND PRIVACY RIGHTS](#)** – Prohibits the conveyance or transfer of ownership rights of writings and other electronic communications created by a student at the University of Wyoming or any community college. It also provides for an expectation of privacy in student writings and other communications. **The bill passed House Education Committee on 1/13. WACCT testified in support.**

[Please see the WACCT 2017 Bill Tracking](#) for more bills. We have several bills of concern, namely, HB 136 – Campus Carry and HB 137 – Wyoming repeal gun free zones act.

## **IN THE NEWS**

[Despite massive deficit, Wyoming's education funding solution remains up in the air](#) – 1/11/17 – Casper Star Tribune

[Mead to legislature – Don't save during a time of budget cuts](#) – 1/12/17 – Casper Star Tribune

[Bills would allow concealed carry in government meetings and on college campuses](#) – 1/14/17 – Casper Star Tribune

## **KEY EVENTS OF THE 2017 SESSION:**

(37 day schedule – Recess Friday & Monday for President's Day)

- Day 1 Tuesday, January 10 Session convenes.
- Day 12 Wednesday, January 25 Last day for Senate Files to be submitted to LSO for introduction. (noon)
- Day 15 Monday, January 30 Last day for House Bills to be submitted to LSO for introduction. (noon)
- Day 18 Thursday, February 2 Last day for bills to be reported out of Committee in house of origin.
- Day 19 Friday, February 3 Last day for Committee of the Whole in house of origin.
- Day 20 Monday, February 6 Last day for Second Reading in house of origin.
- Day 21 Tuesday, February 7 Last day for Third Reading on Bills in house of origin.
- Friday, February 17 & Monday, February 20 President's Day Recess
- Day 32 Friday, February 24 Last day for bills to be reported out of Committee in second house.
- Day 33 Monday, February 27 Last day for Committee of the Whole in the second house.
- Day 34 Tuesday, February 28 Last day for Second Reading in the second house.
- Day 35 Wednesday, March 1 Last day for Third Reading in the second house.
- Day 36 Thursday, March 2 Concurrence on Amendments/Joint Conference Committee Reports.
- Day 37 Friday, March 3 Joint Conference Committee Reports; All JCC Reports due to Front Desk by 2:00 p.m.;
- ADJOURN by Midnight.
- Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday - March 6, 7 and 8 are available if necessary.