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## FINAL LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY – MARCH 7, 2023

This supplemental budget session came and went in a flash, however the 37-day session still allowed for many tough issues to be discussed including property tax relief, abortion bans, Medicaid health benefits for new mothers, crossover voting and banning transgender youth health services and inclusion in K12 sports. There was a total of 497 bills and resolutions numbered and 196 that passed. Leadership was proud of the effort to resolve the budget in the fastest amount of time along with the record amount of savings (\$1.4B). [Click here](#) to read the final statement from House Speaker Sommers and President Driskill if you are a Casper Star Tribune subscriber.

For property tax relief, two major bills passed this session:

- **HB 99 – Property Tax Refund Program** (which provides for targeted tax relief for those most in need). It broadened the eligibility of an existing property tax program to more Wyoming residents by increasing the eligibility to 125 percent of median income and allows for a refund up to 75 percent of a residential property owner’s tax bill.
- **SJR 3 – Property tax residential property class** (which began the process as a bill targeting relief for the elderly and infirmed) and was significantly amended in the House to start the process of creating a forth tier specifically for residential property. Because it is a resolution, it must go before Wyoming voters in the general election in 2024. If approved, the resolution would authorize the Legislature to create a subclass of owner-occupied primary residences whereupon a lower level of assessment could be made at a future date. The resolution is still on the Governor’s desk for signature.

Other issues of interest:

- **Abortion** – two bills passed – one serving as a trigger ban of sorts (excluding pregnancy resulting from inset or rape) and one that bans chemical abortions.
- **Military** – several bills passed to augment the services and benefits for members and families of the Wyoming National Guard
- **Crossover voting ban** – the Governor allowed HB 103 to become law without his signature. This action is a way for the Governor to allow something to become law but without his endorsement. In his letter on the bill he suggested, “the bill adds uncertainty to the voting process.” The bill bans voters from changing their party affiliation after the first day of the candidate filing period, among other things.
- **Postpartum Medicaid expanded for new mothers** – The Governor was pleased to sign HB 4 which authorizes another ten months of Medicaid benefits for mothers on Medicaid.

The end of the session usually happens around Dr. Seuss's birthday, which always offers an opportunity to bring a little lightheartedness to the heavy and tiresome work of the Legislature. Senator Chris Rothfuss honored Dr. Seuss's birthday with his Seuss-like recap of the topics of the session. You can to [watch it](#) here and go to minute 13:57. It will not disappoint!

#### [NEW WCCC COMMISSIONERS CONFIRMED BY THE SENATE](#)

The Senate approves all Gubernatorial appointments and this year the WCCC gained two new Commissioners, Patty Flynn, from Shell, and Natalia Macker, from Jackson, replacing retiring Kay Dooley and Dennis Boal. Please help WACCT welcome Commissioners Elliot and Macker!

#### [SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET SUMMARY](#)

The Community Colleges fared well in the supplemental budget which passed the House on a 37-25 vote and the Senate 20-10. There was a record \$1.4B socked away into savings (thank you oil and gas), the deficit for K12 was resolved, and 20 new state employees were added. Nearly half of the savings will head into the Permanent Mineral Trust Fund with the other half going into K12 education accounts. After the hit to oil and gas prices just before the pandemic hit, this is a nice fiscal turning point (which we all know will come around again with our volatile minerals revenue streams).

The \$1.4 billion in savings accounts for nearly 78% of the overall \$1.8 billion supplemental budget, and is the state's largest savings deposit in at least 15 years (possibly largest in state history).

The Governor did veto some aspects of the budget, including the ongoing nature of the inflation adjustment for the colleges – [click here to read his full budget veto message](#). Here is a quick summary of the major components:

- **Inflation impacts** - The Governor reduced the one-time added \$3.5M agreed to in the Joint Conference Committee to \$500,000. Still, he kept the \$693,000 from his original recommendation for the colleges and allowed it to be biennialized, but that part was overridden by both the House and Senate. So, what's the bottom line? **\$1,193,000 for college operations for the second year of the current biennium for inflation.** The WCCC, since SF 46 did not pass, still does not have authority to ask for inflation in the biennial budget process.
- **CapCon model application/software for the WCCC** was funded with some on-going maintenance.
- **Compensation:**
  - Colleges: supplemental \$6,373,520 and biennial \$12,747,040 + \$7.5M from last year (one time) = \$20,247,040, which is very close to the WCCC's ask for employee compensation for the biennium (just keep in mind it is only the \$6,373,520 that will be ongoing).
  - WPTV: supplemental \$123,927, and biennial \$247,854
- **Wyoming's Tomorrow endowment** - \$20M which gets the endowment account to \$30M. Since neither HB 30 nor HB 109 passed, we still do not have anything in statute that allows for non-government contributions to the endowment.
- **Higher Education Scholarships** - \$1.25M (to be modeled after the Wyoming's Tomorrow Scholarship Program).

#### [INTERIM TOPICS](#)

The joint committees met to discuss interim topics; however, the Management Council will not meet until March 23 in the Historic Supreme Court room of the capitol to assign final topics. The Community Colleges should expect to report to several committees, including Appropriations, Minerals, Labor, and Education (where

more interim study will likely occur). Expect the Revenue Committee to discuss major issues like property tax relief and overall tax reform. The Education Committee will meet on the following days:

- May 23-24 Casper
- August 8-9 TBD
- September 27 virtual (likely joint with JAC to discuss K12 funding)
- November 14-15 TBD

WACCT offered to provide a community college educational session once again for the Joint Education Committee as well as a reception for the interim committee. Stay tuned for more information after the Management Council meets.

Finally, WACCT did have a few wins with HB 28 and HB 29 passing. Cap con ceiling for WCCC approval increased from \$100,000 to \$250,000 and removal of the lesser weight given to distance education in the funding allocation model – both small but important wins for the Community Colleges! Please refer to our [bill tracking sheet](#) for a final breakdown of the bills WACCT tracked.

Thank you once again to our fiscal sponsors and industry partners!