
FINAL LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY MARCH 12, 2026

The Wyoming Legislature wrapped up its 2026 budget session on Wednesday, March 11, after an intense and fast-moving four weeks. While the primary task was crafting a balanced, conservative budget, lawmakers devoted substantial time to high-profile debates on gun rights, abortion, election policy, and proposed cuts to the University of Wyoming and the Wyoming Business Council. Throughout these discussions, the role and visibility of the Community Colleges rose significantly, as conversations about property tax relief, capital construction, and long-term funding stability became increasingly interconnected.

During the 2026 Budget Session, a total of 335 bills and resolutions were numbered for introduction, with 114 ultimately passing both chambers. The Senate introduced 101 bills and sent 72 to the Governor, while the House introduced 91 bills and advanced 42. Across the session, legislators worked through 837 amendments, and committee bills once again proved the most successful, with 65 clearing both chambers (57 percent), compared to 49 individually sponsored bills (22 percent).

The Legislature adopted the State's 2027–2028 biennial budget on March 2 after months of review and debate. The final budget includes \$10.10 billion in total appropriations from all funds, with \$3.46 billion from the state's general fund. This represents a reduction of \$33.8 million in all funds and \$1.9 million in general funds from what the Governor and Judicial Branch originally requested (excluding capital construction). Budget deliberations were extensive: the House considered 247 amendments and adopted 37, while the Senate debated 72 and adopted 37. A Joint Conference Committee reconciled the two versions before the bill was sent to the Governor.

Gov. Mark Gordon signed the budget on March 5 and issued several line-item vetoes. The Legislature voted by a two-thirds majority in both chambers to override four of those vetoes, finalizing the 2027–2028 biennial budget.

In addition to the budget, lawmakers passed two major K–12 education measures. The school finance recalibration bill includes a \$275 million appropriation for the School Foundation Program, and the K–12 school facilities bill provides \$393.7 million for construction, maintenance, and upgrades to public school buildings statewide.

BUDGET SUMMARY

Through the Wyoming Community College Commission (WCCC), the college began the budget session asking for a combined \$43M in funding (\$19M unrestricted operating funding, \$15M CTE, and \$9M for Wyoming Works), still carrying an emphasis on sustainably funding the colleges into the future.

It's essential to understand the full financial picture when reductions to local mills are layered on top of the rising cost of delivering community college education. Overall, ongoing funding to the colleges amounts to \$33M. The Wyoming Community College Commission estimates that current property tax relief measures will reduce local mill revenue by **\$16.6M** across the system over the biennium. When that loss is combined with the **\$19M** the Commission requested simply to keep pace with inflation, the colleges still end up \$380,854 short. The gap becomes even more pronounced when compared to the Commission's original **\$48M** identified need earlier in the budget cycle.

While it may be tempting to focus on what the colleges did not receive, the real issue in front of all of us is the **actual cost of delivering high-quality community college education**—and how that cost continues to grow as revenues decline.

The takeaway is straightforward: we are playing a long game when it comes to messaging about **sustainable funding** (this includes the right dollar amount and funding model) and the true cost of education delivery. With a general election approaching—and a proposed 50% reduction in residential property taxes on the horizon—clear, consistent communication about the financial realities facing Wyoming’s community colleges is more important than ever.

Please see the summary below:

Community Colleges

- \$14.6M for community college employee compensation increases (a priority for the colleges for several years)
- Adds \$5M to the WCCC block grant for the colleges - ongoing funding
- Maintains \$1.5M in state aid (denying recalibration reduction)
- \$7.5M for CTE - ongoing funding (asked for \$15M)
- \$600K more for college rodeo teams (already have \$200K) - ongoing funding
- \$750,450 competitive grant for dual enrollment pilot program - one-time funding
- Includes language prohibiting the use of state aid to pay student athletes salaries or endorsement compensation

Wyoming Community College Commission

- Funds 100% of technology request within the WCCC's administration budget request
- \$5M (asked for \$9M) for Wyoming Works programmatic funding and \$584,486 for student funding - one-time funding
- \$3,929,004 for Adult Education, \$7,521,256 for Wyoming Investment in Nursing, \$481,250 for Veteran's Tuition Benefits
- Raises state employee compensation to 2024 pay tables

Wyoming Public Television

- WPTV's standard budget request, plus increases the WPTV's endowment spending authority to \$400K
- \$3M for WPTV's exception request for operations
- \$283,598 for WPTV employee pay increases

BILLS OF INTEREST (BILLS THAT PASSED)

- **SF 20 – Data privacy for government entities** – the WCCC and the colleges need to keep track of the impacts of this bill. If it requires an increase in resources (including dollars), we will need to report back to the Department of Enterprise Technology Services and the legislature.
- **SF 47 – Increase in Hathaway Scholarship awards** - This bill increases the scholarship awards from the Hathaway Scholarship Program (Program) beginning July 1, 2026, by increasing the awards by 40.5 percent: Hathaway Provisional Opportunity Scholarship and Hathaway Opportunity Scholarship increase from \$840 to \$1,180 per semester, Hathaway Performance Scholarship increases from \$1,260 to \$1,770 per semester, and Hathaway Honors Scholarship increases from \$1,680 to \$2,360 per semester. The maximum Hathaway Need Based Scholarship, for students other than Hathaway Honors Scholarship awardees, increases from a maximum of \$1,575 to \$2,120 per year and a minimum of \$105 to \$150 per year. Program award amounts have been increased once since the Program began in FY 2007, a 5 percent increase in accordance with 2014 Wyoming Session Laws, Chapter 119, beginning FY 2015.
- **HB 25 – Wyoming’s Tomorrow Scholarship** – eliminates the continuous enrollment requirement for the scholarship.
- **HB 45 – Long Term Homeowner Tax Exemption** – This is the only tax relief bill to pass this session. This bill changes the long-term homeowner tax exemption deadline and repeals the sunset date, decreasing property taxes beginning in tax year 2027 (FY 2028). Tax year 2025 impact of \$45M. The bill passed with amendments to keep the 25 years of paying taxes (65 years of age), owner occupied, and put a limit on the amount of assessed valuation to which the exemption would apply (the first 3M of market value), and amend the exemption to 50%

of assessed value. The WCCC will continue to calculate the impact of this bill, along with the other tax relief measures.

- **HB 96** – lowering the age of conceal carry from 21 to 18.
- **HB 111** – State funded capital construction – includes funding for the following projects:
 - LCCC exterior renewal
 - Sheridan College Science Center
 - Major maintenance for all colleges, including the NWC Student Center
 - \$750,000 one-to-one match for CWC Jackson Campus
 - \$6M for the GCCD Enzi Building (only if they impose 4 mills)

INTERIM TOPICS

The Management Council will meet on April 1st to discuss interim topics. The Community College should expect to see interest from the Joint Education Committee and the Joint Corporations Committee. Meetings dates have not been set at this time.

WHAT'S NEXT

As we close out the 2026 budget session, expect to hear from Erin Taylor with guidance on how to communicate with your legislators about the work that unfolded over the past four weeks. This session was unpredictable at times—some legislators supported community college priorities one day and not the next. There were numerous votes touching our issues, and not everyone voted consistently or even on the same side from bill to bill. That's the nature of a fast-moving budget session with high-profile debates layered on top of complex funding questions.

One truth in politics remains constant: you may not agree with someone today, but you may need their vote tomorrow. Relationships matter. And as we continue the long-game messaging around sustainable funding, especially with a proposed 50% reduction in residential property taxes looming in the general election, maintaining those relationships is more important than ever.

I have one request for all of you—***thank your legislators***. It's okay to keep track of who supports your college but keep working to maintain relationships. Our job is to keep educating, keep showing up, and keep building trust.