



Week five was budget week on both sides of the legislature. The Senate finished all amendments on Friday, however, the House needs Monday to continue debating third reading amendments. The budget bill aims to cut government even further from Governor Mead's recommendations. The Joint Appropriations Committee (before the budget amendments) took an additional \$30 million from general operations. The bill eliminates 135 full-time positions and 10 part-time positions and directs Governor Mead to identify an additional 75 positions to cut by June 30, 2018.

Other areas to highlight in the budget:

- Tribal liaisons – The JAC cut the Governor's request in half to have two separate tribal liaisons for the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone tribes. This has been the focus of several budget amendments.
- State prison – the JAC did not recommend borrowing money by issuing bonds to build a new state prison, as the Governor recommended. This has also been the topic of several budget amendments.
- Local governments – The JAC denied the additional \$5 million Governor Mead recommended to local governments (usually directed to the State Loan and Investment Board).
- Higher education – To "equalize" cuts across state agencies for position reductions, the JAC cut the block grant to community colleges by another \$590,000 and \$1.4 million to the University of Wyoming. **An amendment passed the Senate to restore that funding, and there are several in the House to do the same – they will be debated on Monday.**

Thank you to everyone to came to Cheyenne to participate in the WACCT trustee education meetings, other college meetings, WCCC meeting, and of course, our WACCT 2016/2017 Awards and Legislative function at LCCC. I think it was a smashing success – especially given the tough day involving budget amendments. We had quite a few legislators attend, the State Auditor, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, representatives from the Secretary of State's office, and Governor Matt Mead, himself. The host college, LCCC, did such a wonderful job hosting the event – please make sure to thank them for a job well done!

### **BILLS OF INTEREST THIS WEEK**

[HB 59 - Higher education fiscal procedure amendments](#) – Provides for submittal of an exception budget request for health insurance funding; provides that state matching funds for specified higher education endowment accounts shall only be made available to the extent contributions are received by the higher education institution. **Passed both houses. Now awaits signature by the Governor.**

[HB 237 – Community college capital construction](#) - The bill grants authority for the schools to start using their private funds on the mentioned projects. **Passed the House and second reading in the Senate this week.**

[SF 132 – ENDOW initiative](#) - Provides for an economic diversification council to oversee and promote economic diversification activities in the state. \$1.5M would be available for grants to business and the community colleges and \$1M would be needed to administer the program. **Passed the Senate – referred to House Appropriations. WACCT testified in support of this bill.**

[SF 152 – Hathaway student scholarships](#) – the bill repeals the provisional level of the Hathaway scholarship and creates a savings account students may access as they complete their Hathaway

curriculum. **The bill did pass general file in the Senate this week– this is worthy of continued discussion next interim.**

[Please see the WACCT 2017 Bill Tracking](#) for more bills.

**We still await to hear where HB 136 – Campus Carry is assigned.** Once we know, WACCT will let you know so you can contact your senators. Below is a letter written by six of the seven college presidents and President Nichols from UW. It was sent to all the local papers. It has some great talking points that you may use when visiting with your legislators.

### **GUNS ON WYOMING CAMPUSES: WORTH THE RISK?**

*Proponents of legislation currently making its way through the Legislature believe that allowing concealed firearms on campus will make our campuses safer and suggest that past acts of violence could have been minimized or avoided entirely, had concealed carry been allowed. Opponents of the legislation argue that more firearms on campus will result in more injuries and fatalities.*

*Because the free and vigorous exchange of ideas in an environment of civil discourse is a cornerstone of college and university life, we have followed this debate with interest. Unfortunately, so far the debate has not been illuminated by valid research, in part because carrying firearms on college campuses is relatively new and in part because the research is not readily available. As a result, we, like all Wyoming citizens, have been asked to rely on anecdote, speculation, and hypothesis, often highly emotional, as we weigh a decision that may have far-reaching impacts on campus safety.*

*There is, however, a growing body of research backing the notion that allowing concealed carry of firearms on college and university campuses is not the answer. Some examples:*

- 1. Evidence does not support the conclusion that civilians carrying guns will reduce injury or stop violent crimes. Data from the National Crime Victimization Survey suggest the use of a firearm for self-defense during violent crimes is very rare and is no more effective in mitigating injuries than any other type of response from victims. In addition, a study by the FBI in 2013 found that, of the 160 active shooter incidents between 2000 and 2013, only one was stopped by a person with a concealed carry permit, and he happened to be a Marine. In contrast, 21 active shooters were stopped by unarmed citizens.*
- 2. Accidental discharge of firearms on campus is a legitimate concern. For example, in 2012 a University of Colorado employee injured herself and another woman when she attempted to show her gun to her co-workers. More recently (2014), an Idaho State University professor with a concealed carry permit accidentally shot himself in the foot in a classroom full of students just months after Idaho's campus carry law went into effect. A student at Weber State (Utah) was carrying a gun in his pocket when it went off, shooting himself in the leg. A University of Southern Mississippi student accidentally shot himself while sitting in his car.*
- 3. Recent research from the University of Massachusetts–Boston suggests that civilian firearm carry may lead to more fatalities, not fewer. In a study of 111 mass shootings from 1966 to 2015, 90% of the shootings occurred in areas where civilians were already allowed to carry firearms. More concerning, of these 111 shootings, those that occurred in states with right-to-carry laws or no concealed-carry regulations had average death tolls higher than those occurring in states without this latitude.*
- 4. Student behavior makes guns on campus dangerous. The college years are a time when students often explore risky situations and risky behavior. In part, this is because portions of young adults' brains*

are undeveloped, impacting their judgment. A 2002 study by Harvard's School of Public Health found that students who carried guns were more likely to binge drink and engage in risky and aggressive behavior after drinking. For example, during a fraternity fight at Northern Arizona University, a student retrieved a gun from his car, ultimately killing one and injuring three others. At Texas Southern University, an argument escalated until one individual pulled a gun, killing another and wounding a bystander. At Lone Star College (TX), an argument turned physical, with one of the students ultimately pulling a gun and injuring the other, wounding a college maintenance worker as well.

5. Stress, depression and mental illness, which are increasingly being reported among students, present another major concern. Johns Hopkins University research asserts that suicide attempts leading to hospitalization or death rise dramatically and peak during the years that most youth enter college. Research from Harvard's Injury Control Research Center indicates the presence of a gun in the home in the U.S. increases the risk for suicide. Many students' home is in our residence halls or in rental homes and apartments nearby. The heightened emotional volatility of the college years, combined with the higher "success" rates of suicide attempts with firearms, argues against having firearms easily available on campus.

Many other concerns are emerging as valid in the research. These range from impacts on free speech in classrooms or on campus when guns are present, to the ability to recruit and retain faculty and staff, to significant cost increases for insurance and damages from lawsuits resulting from incidents of guns on college campuses.

For all of the reasons stated above, the belief that these decisions should be left to local control, and the conviction that there are numerous other approaches to ensuring or increasing safety on our college and university campuses that should be considered first, we collectively stand in opposition to HB136.

Submitted by Drs. Laurie Nichols (President, UW), Paul Young (President, Northern Wyoming Community College District), Karla Leach (President, Western Wyoming Community College), Rick Patterson (President, Eastern Wyoming College), Stefani Hicswa (President, Northwest College), Brad Tyndall (President, Central Wyoming College), and Joe Schaffer (President, Laramie County Community College).

## **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.