

# ADVOCACY

Advocating for Wyoming Doctors and their Patients Since 1903

## February 17-21, 2020 ~ Week Two Update

### Deciding Our State Budget

Week one was a whirlwind of bill introductions and week two was nearly all about money. Committees discussed and debated policy proposals, but floor debate seemed almost entirely focused on how Wyoming is going to prioritize spending and look to find new revenue for the coming biennium.

The House and Senate began the week simultaneously reading in mirror budget bills. Detailed First Readings of each agency budget filled Monday and Tuesday and the real debate kicked off Wednesday with Second Reading and amendments. After working late into the night Wednesday, they took a budget break Thursday and then went back for a third round of debate Friday with Third Reading amendments.

With two different versions of the budget passing in each chamber, a huge burden gets placed on members of the Joint Conference Committee to debate and decide on one final version to send back to each Chamber for approval.



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**The WMS Voice in Health Policy** worked really hard this week on behalf of our members. Not everything went our way, but there is still time in the process to improve the final outcome of some of these issues. Stay up to date with us using our **Legislative Bill Tracker**. The budget bill has been added to the legislative tracker along with amendments of importance to WMS members.

WMS will provide a comprehensive overview of how healthcare fared in this year's budget process once there is again one version to analyze. Right now the House and Senate budgets look very different.

## WMS Legislative Bill Tracker

### WMS Doc and PA of the Day

Thank you to our volunteers who serve the Wyoming Legislature and staff during the session. WMS is proud of our physicians who care for our Senators and Representatives.

- **Larry Kirven, MD**
- **Kim Westbrook, MD**



## Volunteer for Doc or PA of the Day

We still have a few days open. Don't miss the opportunity to be a part of this unique and amazing experience. Contact WMS Communications Director, Whitney Harmon, at [whitney@wyomed.org](mailto:whitney@wyomed.org), or [CLICK HERE](#) to learn more and pick your day!

### The Big Debates This Week

Week two committees discussed and passed some meaningful legislative proposals and had interesting discussions. Policies ranging from healthcare global signature authority and workplace mental injury coverage for first responders, to seizure safe schools and state employee paid leave for organ donation filled committee room conversations. These policies, and so many others like them, often exist under the media radar and are rarely recognized for the benefits they bring to healthcare in Wyoming. Details on each of those bills and their committee outcome are listed below.

Unfortunately, week two also brought back the difficult and sensitive discussions around women's reproductive health. WMS, and our members, testified in three committees this week all surrounding debates on abortion practices in the state. WMS does not take a position on elective abortion out of respect to the diversity of our membership and a recognition that Wyoming's physicians and PAs

hold varying opinions and viewpoints on the procedure itself. However, WMS does strongly oppose policies that serve to unnecessarily insert state government between our physicians, PAs and their patients or penalize and criminalize healthcare providers for doing their jobs.

The House Judiciary Committee debated the medical necessity of requiring a 48-hour waiting period prior to an abortion ([House Bill 197](#)) and the Senate Labor, Health and Social Services Committee spent two committee meetings hearing testimony about the care that providers deliver to infants born alive. Proponents of [Senate File 97](#) believe the new language would close a perceived loophole in WY statute and better protect infants born alive as a result of an attempted abortion. Opponents held strong that infants are already statutorily protected and that the new language, as written, would only serve to confuse the situation and instill fear in healthcare providers who are currently honoring best practices. Dr. Rene Hinkle, a Cheyenne obstetrician and gynecologist, beautifully articulated the unnecessary challenges the new language would create if implemented by sharing stories of tragic events in which families are left no choice but to induce labor early (defined in statute as abortion) due to abnormalities or unsurvivable defects of a fetus. Currently, physicians navigate those sad waters with families by providing comfort care and ensuring the family gets the time they need together. With the passage of Senate File 97, physicians would question whether the new law forces them to instead apply all medically appropriate and reasonable steps to preserve the life regardless of the infant's chances of survival. Inserting ambiguous terms and subjective requirements into law while threatening felony prosecution and 14 years imprisonment for physicians is bad policy and WMS will continue to oppose, or amend, this language.

Both bills passed committee this week despite the good work of informed legislators like pro-life Senator Fred Baldwin, PA-C, and the efforts he made to help the Senate committee understand the plethora of issues SF 97 presents to medicine. These debates serve to divide people and harm relationships without accomplishing anything meaningful in current medical practice, which Senator Baldwin detailed in his comments highlighting current law and the prohibitions that currently exist on late-term abortions and the care that is already required of all viable infants born alive.

[Senate File 69 - Rural healthcare districts](#) - Passed Senate Agriculture (4-1)

[Senate File 91 - Global signature authority](#) - Passed Senate Health (5-0)

[House Bills 113 - Importation of Rx Drugs study](#) - Passed House Health (9-0)

[House Bill 143 - Rx drugs access and affordability](#). Failed to leave Committee

[House Bill 141 - Seizure safe schools](#) - Failed to leave Committee

[House Bill 232 - Organ donations-state employee leave](#) - Passed House Health (9-0)

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## WWAMI Day at the State Legislature

Every year, the first year WWAMI medical students take a day to visit the legislature. Thursday, February 20, began with a legislative appreciation lunch at the Cheyenne Depot, followed by introductions in both the House and Senate Chambers, and ended with a personal visit with Governor Gordon.

# What to Expect Next

## A Short Break from the Budget

Monday, February 24, is the last day for bills to be reported out of committee in their house of origin. Any bill that has not been reported out of committee by Monday fails to move forward in this year's process. The floor calendar for Monday is filled with bill proposals and is absent budget debate meaning week three will kick off with a short reprieve from talks about money.

House Labor, Health and Social Services will be debating an important bill for WMS upon adjournment this Monday. [House Bill 85 - Prescription Tracking Program Rules](#) is a bill requested by WMS to help address statewide concerns surrounding mandated use of the state's PDMP. WMS will be asking the committee to consider proposed amendments to the bill which members can see by clicking [HERE](#). WMS is hopeful that

our proposed changes will be well received and we will be able to ease some of the undue burden last year's PDMP laws placed on our members.

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## How To Connect and Stay Engaged

Use [wyoleg.gov](http://wyoleg.gov) to learn more about this year's legislative process. Below are quick links to important information.

[Daily Calendars](#) including floor calendars, audio streams, and committee schedules

[Bill Listing](#) that includes all legislative proposals posted for the 2020 Session

As always, Executive Director Sheila Bush welcomes and invites any and all communication. If you have questions about the status of a bill, want to provide feedback or input on legislation, or want to share your thoughts on any other aspect of the WMS advocacy work, please email her at [sheila@wyomed.org](mailto:sheila@wyomed.org) or call her cell phone at 307-630-8602.



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