

## 2024 Session Priorities

Hello Sublette County and LaBarge, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you at the tail end of the interim, prior to the 2024 Budget Session. Most of the legislative committees have finished their work, with the exception of the Joint Appropriations Committee. I asked the Chairmen of the House committees, as they finished their work, to provide me with the interim topics they felt were most important to their committees. While most have completed their work, not all of the committee bills have been posted to the legislative website. You can find bills available for the 2024 Budget Session at <https://wyoleg.gov/Legislation/2024> . Below I will highlight the topics the Chairmen deemed most important coming out of their committees during the interim. I am also working on some individual bills, but I will discuss those in a future press release.

1. Judiciary Committee – Unsolved murders: Department of Criminal Investigation (DCI) will be creating a database of cold cases, and agencies across the state will identify their cold cases and supply them to DCI for inclusion in the database. Once complete, we will have a system to ensure that victims in unsolved cases are not forgotten. Another priority is to adopt the Uniform Child Abduction Prevention Act, which would authorize a district court to order child abduction prevention measures when the evidence establishes a credible risk of abduction.
2. Appropriations Committee – Development of the budget.
3. Revenue Committee – Property tax relief: The highest priority includes a property tax exemption bill for long-term homeowners. Nearly half the states have this type of provision. A resident who has paid residential property taxes in the state for 30 years and reaches age 65 is granted a 50 percent exemption. Another property tax bill caps the rate of increase in property tax at 5 percent. A Homestead Exemption that provides some relief to all citizens is another measure that will be debated.
4. Education Committee - Developmental preschool rebasing: This is an attempt to update the funding model for developmental preschools.

5. Agriculture Committee - Elk/Cattle conflict on private land range resource: Development of a compensation measure for rangeland impacts on private lands when elk are over objective.
6. Travel, Recreation and Wildlife - Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund: Provides for an Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund that would be governed in a manner similar to the existing Wyoming Wildlife Natural Resource Trust Fund. The Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund would be utilized to fund grants to local communities for outdoor recreation projects.
7. Corporations Committee – One priority was the Rocky Mountain Power rate hike proposal, and potential solutions for future rate hikes. Another priority was several election bills that close a campaign finance loophole, enact a 30-day residency requirement for voting in Wyoming, and improve election intimidation statutes.
8. Transportation Committee – Its top priority bill is Electric Vehicle Tax amendments, which updates existing definitions and categories of electric vehicles. Electric vehicles should pay a road tax similar to vehicles that pay a fuel tax at the pump. All vehicles must help pay for upkeep of Wyoming’s highways. A second priority would be a CDL Hazmat bill that promotes an in-state Hazmat license for individuals under 21.
9. Minerals Committee – Its top priority is Carbon Capture Utilization and Storage. The committee continued to refine the laws around underground carbon sequestration, which continues a several year effort. This work is designed to help our fossil fuels industry survive changing markets and uncertain federal politics.
10. Labor/Health Committee – Prior Authorization: Prior Authorization is a process whereby a provider (a doctor), on behalf of their patient, must seek approval from the patient’s insurer before delivering a treatment or service. Wyoming is the only state with no statutory language around Prior Authorization for medical procedures, and the committee spent the interim coming up with a bill they believe works and is fair for all sides to decrease this burdensome process.

I view the budget as our number one priority in the Legislature in the upcoming session, because we are constitutionally required to pass a balanced budget every two years. In addition to the budget, I believe thoughtful measured property tax relief and reform is a top priority, followed by work in improving mental health services for students, adults and vulnerable adults.

The 2024 Budget Session of the 67th Legislature will start on February 12, and conclude 20 working days later, on March 8. The Wyoming Constitution allows the Legislature to convene for only 60 working days over a two-year period. Please contact me with questions and concerns at [albert@albertsommers.com](mailto:albert@albertsommers.com) .