

2021 First Quarter Issues Report for Wyoming Public Media

Issue: Politics

Topic: Wyoming Public Radio's Capitol Hill Correspondent Matt Laslo was covering the counting of the electoral votes in the U.S. Capitol when it was stormed by Trump supporters this week. Laslo joined Wyoming Public Radio's Bob Beck and described his experience.

Time: 8 min

Date: 1/8/21 at 3pm and 1/10/21 at noon

Topic: The rural West voted overwhelmingly for President Trump last election. But after this week's insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, our Mountain West News Bureau's Nate Hegyi wanted to find out how people were feeling about the president and the state of our country now.

Time: 5 min

Date: 1/8/21 at 3pm and 1/10/21 at noon

Topic: It's been an interesting month for U.S. Representative Liz Cheney. After handily winning reelection in November, she voted to impeach former President Donald Trump and has faced a strong backlash. Cheney has been censured by the Carbon County Republican Party, is likely to be censured by the Republican Central Committee next month, and already has primary opponents for 2022. Wyoming Public Radio's Bob Beck reports.

Time: 5 min

Date: 1/22/21 at 3pm and 1/24/21 at noon

Topic: Wyoming lawmakers have been in a cutting mode since coal revenues started to decline, but with oil and gas also bringing in less money than usual it's tougher for the state to pay for services. Lawmakers plan to address their budget shortfall by approving a number of cuts to the current state budget when they meet in March. One solution is to raise taxes, but for many the solution is to reform the tax structure, so that energy does not pay the majority of taxes in the

state. Ashley Harpstreith is the Executive Director of the Wyoming Taxpayers Association. She explains to Bob Beck why her organization likes this approach.

Time: 7 min

Date: 2/5/21 at 3pm and 2/7/21 at noon

Topic: The pandemic has caused huge revenue shortfalls in state budgets across our region and the country. And in some places, that's meant a renewed conversation about taxes. But one of those conversations may not be what you would expect. Wyoming Public Radio's Maggie Mullen reports.

Time: 4 min

Date: 2/26/21 at 3pm and 2/28/21 at noon

Topic: Wyoming's legislature meets next week and among the topics will be education spending and budget cuts in general. Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon joins Bob Beck and begins the conversation by discussing some of the budget challenges the state is facing.

Time: 8 min

Date: 2/26/21 at 3pm and 2/28/21 at noon

Topic: After the 2020 elections and former President Trump's unfounded concerns about voter fraud and election security, several states are looking to improve election security. Wyoming's legislature is considering a voter ID bill for in-person voting. Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler has more.

Time: 4 min

Date: 3/12/21 at 3pm and 3/14/21 at noon.

Topic: Dissatisfaction with how Wyoming handled the pandemic has reached the legislature. Bills and budget amendments have been crafted to remove the power of the state health officer and to put legislators and county commissioners into the driver's seat. Wyoming Public Radio's Bob Beck has more.

Time: 5 min

Date: 3/12/21 at 3pm and 3/14/21 at noon

Topic: These days, whether you're a lawmaker or a citizen, you may be having trouble agreeing on just about anything with someone on the other end of the political spectrum. But one issue is seeing bona fide bipartisan support in at least one state in our region. Wyoming Public Radio's Maggie Mullen explains.

Time: 4 min

Date: 3/19/21 at 3pm and 3/21/21 at noon

Issue: COVID-19

Topic: The University of Wyoming has prioritized testing for its community during the COVID-19 pandemic. Its testing program started at the beginning of the school year and it's been an important tool as UW monitored the presence of the virus. Wyoming Public Radio's Ivy Engel tells us more.

Time: 5 min

Date: 1/8/21 at 3pm and 1/10/21 at noon

Topic: The COVID-19 vaccine has been touted as the light at the end of the tunnel for the pandemic. But for that to be true, people have to take it. And so far the vaccination distribution has been slow. Part of the problem is that some don't want to take it. Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska explains.

Time: 5 min

Date: 1/8/21 at 3pm and 1/10/21 at noon.

Topic: Nearly 500 Wyomingites have died from the coronavirus since April. Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler brings us this obituary of Cheyenne resident [Sharon Widener](#). Widener died on Oct. 29, 2020 from COVID-19. Widener is survived by her two children, a granddaughter, her siblings and extended family. Widener's daughter and son-in-law Elizabeth and Tim Thorson remember her life.

Time: 7 min

Date: 1/8/21 at 3pm and 1/10/21 at noon

Topic: The pandemic has made the position of county public health officer more than just a part-time job: it has become political. So far, two officers in Wyoming have been removed from their positions and one has resigned. Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska spoke with Washakie County's public officer, who did the work for ten years until he was removed by the commission this past fall. Dr. Ed Zimmerman said before the pandemic, the position was relatively easy.

Time: 5 min

Date: 1/15/21 at 3pm and 1/17/21 at noon

Topic: Baking bread might have become a big pandemic hobby, but in Sheridan, an anonymous person has taken it to another level. A mysterious person who goes by the Instagram handle the Loaf Project is dropping off fresh loaves of bread at strangers' doors who could use a little pick me up. Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler has more.

Time: 5 min

Date: 1/15/21 at 3pm and 1/17/21 at noon

Topic: Many Wyoming health care providers and people who are exposed regularly to COVID-19 were not all that interested in a COVID-19 vaccine. But it turns out, the next priority group which includes people over the age of 70 want it. And the supply isn't matching the demand. Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska has more.

Time: 5 min

Date: 1/22/21 at 3pm and 1/24/21 at noon

Topic: This week Wyoming Congresswoman Liz Cheney beat back an effort to oust her from the GOP leadership. The party is now showing a unified face, but the right wing of the party is still frustrated with Cheney and Democrats say the debate shows how today's GOP lives in an alternative reality. Correspondent Matt Laslo has the story from Washington.

Time: 5 min

2/5/21 at 3pm and 2/7/21 at noon

Topic: February has brought a couple of changes to Wyoming's COVID-19 vaccine distribution. Even with more doses of both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccine delivered this month, State Health Officer Dr. Alexia Harrist told Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska that the biggest challenge is the state not having enough vaccines.

Time: 8 min

2/5/21 at 3pm and 2/7/21 at noon.

Topic: Communicating science is important, especially when it saves lives like in the COVID-19 pandemic. But it's difficult to do when words mean different things to scientists and the public. Wyoming Public Radio's Ashley Piccone explains why word choice matters for scientists and the people listening to them.

Time: 5 min

3/19/21 at 3pm and 3/21/21 AT Noon.

Topic: [More](#) than 530,000 Americans have died due to COVID-19. And that includes close to 700 Wyomingites. In our series to honor their lives, Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler spoke with Lacey Petersen, the granddaughter of longtime [Sundance resident Marlene Cooper](#). Cooper died from the coronavirus in November 2020. Petersen starts by remembering her 86-year-old grandmother's early years in Sundance.

Time: 7 min

Date: 3/19/21 at 3pm and 3/21/21 at noon.

Issue: Energy

Topic: At the end of last year, Congress passed a massive bill to fund the government and provide stimulus checks to Americans. That bill also contained something surprising. It authorized the largest amount of money ever for carbon capture, utilization, and storage... a

technology that Wyoming has heavily invested in and promoted for years in order to save coal. Wyoming Public Radio's Cooper McKim reports what this new support means for the state.

Time: 5 min

Date: 1/8/21 at 3pm and 1/10/21 at noon

Topic: A new investigation between Wyoming Public Radio and The Guardian uncovers how a frequently-cited report truly came about. The taxpayer-funded study considers the economic impacts of the Biden administration's climate plans relating to oil and gas... it gives a grim forecast for western states. What was not disclosed: the influence and financial support from the oil and gas industry. The study is now making the rounds without that important detail: from articles in the New York Times to federal hearings. Energy reporter Cooper McKim worked on the story alongside Emily Holden - founder of Floodlight, a collaborative environmental news site partnered with the Guardian.

Time: 7 min

Date: 3/12/21 at 3pm and 3/14/21 at noon.

Topic: Deb Haaland's road to become Secretary of the Interior has been rocky -- just this week Republican Senators Steve Daines of Montana and Cynthia Lummis of Wyoming placed a hold on her nomination, citing concerns about her positions on fossil fuel industries. Still as The Mountain West News Bureau's Savannah Maher reports some tribal communities in our region that depend on fossil fuels are looking to Haaland to help them diversify.

Time: 4 min

Date: 3/12/21 at 3pm and 3/14/21 at noon.

Topic: Albany County is deep in a debate about the possibility of wind development within its borders. Wyoming Public Radio's Jeff Victor reports that finding facts about the issue can be difficult.

Date: 3/19/21 at 3pm and 3/21/21 at noon.

Issue: Education

Topic: Wyoming schools are looking at a big cut and calibration to the state's school funding model this year. Educators are worried about what this means for their students and instruction as lawmakers are considering the next steps.

Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler spoke with State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jillian Balow about how this time the cuts will impact education in a big way.

Time: 7 min

Date: 2/5/21 at 3pm and 2/7/21 at noon

Topic: Community college is an affordable first step into higher education for both high school graduates and non-traditional students. Central Wyoming College in Riverton, is making this step easier for Native students. Wyoming Public Radio's Taylor Stagner has more.

Time: 5 min

Date: 2/5/21 at 3pm and 2/7/21 at noon

Topic: or the last several years the Wyoming Senate in particular has been promising to make major cuts to education funding. While there have been reductions, K-12 education has not faced the types of cuts the Department of Health, the University of Wyoming or other areas of state government has faced. This year there seems to be momentum to make those cuts, but the current proposal may not be constitutional. Wyoming Public Radio's Bob Beck explains.

Time: 5 min

Date: 2/12/21 at 3pm and 2/14/21 at noon

Topic: Schools are going to have to look hard at the cuts they'll have to make over the coming years to deal with Wyoming's fiscal crisis. And while lawmakers debate changes to the system, many districts are thinking about how to make the necessary cuts NOW for their next budget. Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler has more.

Time: 5 min

Date: 2/12/21 at 3pm and 2/14/21 at noon

Topic: The pandemic has complicated efforts to revitalize Indigenous languages. Many programs have shut down entirely, especially in rural communities. But others are using technology to reach their students, and to bring far-flung tribal citizens into the fold. The Mountain West News Bureau's Savannah Maher reflects on her own experience.

Time: 5 min

Date: 2/12/21 at 3pm and 2/14/21 at noon

Topic: At the start of this school year, Park County School District #1 in Powell welcomed an influx of new special ed students. Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska has a story on how this sudden growth put pressure on the district to make sure that they could meet the students' needs.

Time: 5 min

Date: 2/26/21 at 3pm and 2/28/21 at noon

Topic: Wyoming's economy has depended on energy for a long time, but that formula might not be successful into the future. And entrepreneurship may be one of the answers to state's diversification. The state has created start-up challenges in order to try and foster more small businesses. And now it's even reaching high school students. Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler visits Buffalo High School where some students are just beginning their careers.

Time: 5 min

Date: 2/26/21 at 3pm and 2/28/21 at noon

Topic: Usually segregation in school is something you heard about in the south. But it turns out Wyoming had segregated schools as well. Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska goes back in history and takes a look at one such school in Worland.

Time: 5 min

Date: 3/5/21 at 3pm and 3/7/21 at noon

Topic: Over the last couple of weeks the Wyoming House and Senate has been making changes to the funding model that funds schools in the state. Most of the focus has been on cuts with

the Senate trimming over 100 million dollars and the house somewhere around 60 million. The funding model provides money that schools say they need to operate and is court mandated. To change the model there needs to be evidence that less is needed. Grady Hutcherson is the President of the Wyoming Education Association. He speaks with Bob Beck.

Time: 7 min

Date: 3/19/21 at pm and 3/21/21 at noon.

Issue: Legal Issues

Topic: Back in 2019, a rental housing resolution was put up to a vote by the Laramie City Council. Among other things, it could have led to safety and health standards for rentals. It was a response to the many complaints that some council members had heard that described harsh living conditions and deceptive leases. But the resolution failed. Reporter Jeff Victor has taken a deeper look at the issue and noted one landlord's name that appeared in court documents again and again. Wyoming Public Radio's Maggie Mullen spoke with Victor about his investigative reporting recently published in The Laramie Boomerang.

Time: 7 min

Date: 2/5/21 at 3pm and 2/7/21 at noon

Topic: When Wyoming resident Celeste Armstrong had her driver's license suspended a year ago, she had no way of knowing that her case could completely change the way licenses are suspended. But the University of Wyoming's Defender Aid Clinic took up her case and eventually won in Albany County District Court. Clinic Director Professor Lauren McLane and Student Attorney Nathan Yanchek demonstrated that the Department of Transportation had been using the wrong law to suspend licenses. Wyoming Public Radio's Jeff Victor spoke with McLane about what this means for Wyoming drivers.

Time: 5 min

Date: 2/26/21 at 3pm and 2/28/21 at noon

Issue: Economy

Topic: The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, known as CARES, was the largest stimulus bill ever passed in the United States. Wyoming Public Radio's Jeff Victor reports that Wyoming's cut went to various sectors of the economy, but there's criticism of how that money was split up and concerns that Wyoming will need more funding as the pandemic continues.

Time: 5 min

Date: 1/8/21 at 3pm and 1/10/21 at noon

Topic: The country's pandemic-induced recession and subsequent job losses have been hard on women. The December job numbers were especially brutal. Wyoming Public Radio's Maggie Mullen reports.

Time: 5 min

Date: 1/15/21 at 3pm and 1/17/21 at noon

Topic: Many small businesses throughout the country have taken a hit during the pandemic. But in Wyoming, various grant programs have helped Wyoming businesses, nonprofits and even churches weather the storm. Wyoming Public Radio's Jeff Victor has more.

Time: 5 min

Date: 2/5/21 at 3pm and 2/7/21 at noon.

Topic: Quick and accurate COVID-19 testing is a key part of getting the pandemic under control. And a Laramie company is part of the effort to make that a reality. Wyoming Public Radio's Ivy Engel talked to CellDrop Biosciences founder, Ben Noren.

Time: 5 min

Date: 2/12/21 at 3pm and 2/14/21 at noon.

Topic: Even though Wyoming has twice as many cattle as people, the state does not have a robust meatpacking facility network. In fact, there are mostly only small custom facilities in the

state with only a few that can send products across state lines. Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska reports how the pandemic has propelled those in charge to change this.

Time: 5 min

Date: 3/19/21 at 3pm and 3/21/21 at noon.

Issue: Social Issues

Topic: On the Wind River Indian Reservation, it's hard to get things like fresh vegetables. And lack of access to good food is a contributor to the fact that Native Americans on the reservation have a life expectancy 20 years shorter than non-Indigenous people in the state. Wyoming Public Radio's Taylar Stagner found out how some are looking for solutions to the problem.

Time: 5 min

Date: 1/22/21 at 3pm and 1/24/21 at noon

Topic: Wyoming's Missing Murdered Indigenous Persons Task Force unveiled its findings last month. The reports show that the problem is much bigger than previously recognized and that the media hasn't done a good job of addressing the violence in Wyoming communities. Wyoming Public Radio's Taylar Stagner reports.

Time: 6 min

Date: 2/26/21 at 3pm and 2/28/21 at noon.

Topic: Indian Country was watching this week as Congresswoman Deb Haaland faced confirmation hearings to become the first Indigenous Secretary of the Interior. For many young tribal citizens across our region this was must-see TV. The Mountain West News Bureau's Savannah Maher spoke to some in Wyoming.

Time: 4 min

Date: 2/26/21 at 3pm and 2/28/21 at noon.

Topic: Some former Southern enslaved people and their descendants followed the American dream westward, where they created towns to homestead together. This is a tale of two of those towns-on either side of the Wyoming-Colorado border-and what today's small towns now can learn from their stories. Wyoming Public Radio's Erin Jones reports.

Time: 30 min

Date: 3/5/21 at 3pm and 3/7/21 at noon.

Issue: Environment

Topic: Wildfire research has become increasingly important in recent years as climate change has caused fires to become more common and more intense. But wildfire smoke could be having a bigger effect on the climate than previously thought. Wyoming Public Radio's Ivy Engel spoke to Shane Murphy, a University of Wyoming researcher who studied the smoke from inside the plumes.

Time: 6 min

Date: 1/15/21 at 3pm and 1/17/21 at noon

Topic: Yellowstone National Park is home to the tallest geyser in the world: Steamboat. But scientists don't know why Steamboat geyser erupts when it does or why it spews so much water. In a new study, researchers at the University of California Berkeley explore the answers to these questions. Wyoming Public Radio's science intern Ashley Piccone has more.

Time: 5 min

Date: 1/15/21 at 3pm and 1/17/21 at noon

Topic: In 2018, a Wyoming research scientist ran 92 miles in just three days. His goal? Highlight the challenges of the seasonal migration for mule deer; a well-known species in Wyoming, but also one that's been in decline. A movie called *92 Miles* is set to come out in the next few months about his journey. Wyoming Public Radio's Cooper McKim spoke with Wyoming Migration Initiative research scientist and runner Pat Rodgers on the importance of his trek.

Time: 6 min

Date: 1/15/21 at 3pm and 1/17/21 at noon

Topic: Tiger chert is a stone that was used to make tools in prehistoric times. Artifacts made from the rock are found around the west. New techniques might make it easier to identify more of them. Wyoming Public Radio's Ashley Piccone explains.

Time: 5 min

Date: 2/5/21 at 3pm and 2/7/21 at noon

Topic: Ninety percent of avalanche deaths are triggered by a person. In the first week of February of this year, avalanches in the United States killed at least 14 people. This is the highest number of deaths in a seven-day period in a hundred years. Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska chatted with [American Avalanche Institute](#)'s Jenna Malone, who attributed this season's high number of avalanche deaths to the gap in time between the early snow in the fall and more recent storms.

Time: 5 min

Date: 2/12/21 at 3pm and 2/14/21 at noon

Topic: Things are very dry in the Colorado River Basin already this year. And the situation could get much worse for the water that 40 million people across seven western states rely on. Luke Runyon explains the current drought conditions in five numbers.

Time: 5 min

Date: 2/12/21 at 3pm and 2/14/21 at noon

Topic: Fairy rings are all around Wyoming. You may have seen them without noticing - they look like rings of extra-green grass or mushrooms. Wyoming Public Radio's Ashley Piccone explains how fairy rings got their name and what really creates them.

Time: 5 min

Date: 3/12/21 at 3pm and 3/14/21 at noon

Issue: Arts and Culture

Topic: In 2016, the national park system celebrated its hundredth birthday. When poet [karla k. morton](#) learned that there had never been a complete book of poetry written to celebrate all 62 national parks, she decided to do just that, along with her friend and fellow Texas poet laureate [Alan Birkelbach](#).

Wyoming Public Radio's Micah Schweizer spoke to the two poets about how their new book, [The National Parks: A Century of Grace](#), came to be.

Time: 7 min

Date: 1/8/21 at 3pm and 1/10/21 at noon

Topic: When an [insurrection mob](#) violently pushed through the entrance of the Capitol building on January 6, the American Alliance of Museums issued a [statement](#) condemning the violence that occurred. They did so because the Capitol is more than a workplace, it's a living museum.

Wyoming Public Radio's Naina Rao spoke to University of Wyoming's Art [Museum director](#), Nicole Crawford, on her perspective regarding the aftermath and effects the insurrection has made on art, history, and museums.

Time: 7 min

Date: 1/22/21 at 3pm and 1/24/21 at noon

Topic: Many people think of science and art as complete opposites, but one University of Wyoming researcher is working to combine the two. Wyoming Public Radio's Ashley Piccone spoke with Karen Vaughan, a pedology professor who is using the soil in her research to make watercolor paint. She said soil is more important than you would think.

Time: 5 min

Date: 2/12/21 at 3pm and 2/14/21 at noon.

Topic: The pandemic has put uncertainty at the forefront of many people's lives. It's forced many to believe and hope for better days, even if there's no end in sight.

In the town of Superior, Wyoming, near Rock Springs, there's a mural that reflects this resilient spirit. It's painted on a large, flat rock face along the Wyoming railroad line. And bears giant

images of reclining nymphs, topped by Japanese characters that read, "People of the world, watch my future." That inscription proved true for the late northwest artist, Paul Horiuchi, who created this mural.

Naina Rao spoke with Horiuchi's son, Vincent, about how his father was able to believe in hope despite the hardships and challenges he faced.

Time: 8 min

Date: 3/5/21 at 3pm and 3/7/21 at noon.

Topic: Zack Kennah went to art school at the University of Wyoming then moved to California to be an independent filmmaker. Over the past two years Kennah has written and illustrated a comic inspired by his father's stories growing up on the Wind River Indian Reservation. Wyoming Public Radio's Taylar Stagner spoke with Kennah.

Time: 8 min

Date: 3/12/21 at 3pm and 3/14/21 at noon.