

## 2021 Second Quarter Issues Report for Wyoming Public Media

Prepared by Bob Beck

### ISSUE: Education

Topic: As the state legislature moves forward with possible K-12 budget cuts, the Cody school district is trying to get ahead of the game. The district has proposed reducing staff, including two elementary art teachers. Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska has more.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/2/21 at 3pm and 4/4/21 at noon

Topic: One of the top priorities of many legislators was to reduce spending for K-12 education. But a major disagreement between the House and Senate over whether there should just be reductions or reductions that included some revenue led to the bill's demise. Brian Farmer is the Director of the Wyoming School Boards Association. Wyoming Public Radio's Bob Beck asked him to break down what happened.

Time: 8 min

Date: 4/9/21 at 3pm and 4/11/21 at noon

Topic: The U.S. Department of Education is [proposing a new set of priorities](#) that would incentivize changes to the way history and civics is taught. The federal government is encouraging K-12 schools to include diverse perspectives in history and civics and to take notice of systemic racism in America's history.

Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler spoke with State Superintendent Jillian Balow about the proposal, which Balow sharply criticized.

Time: 8 min

Date: 5/7/21 at 2pm and 5/9/21 at noon.

Topic: Last summer, state officials cautioned school districts across the state to prepare for budget cuts. But in a turn of events, lawmakers failed to agree on the specifics of a bill that would have cut \$135 million from schools over three years. Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler looked into how districts chose to handle the dilemma—to move ahead with cuts or stay where they are.

Time: 4 min

Date: 6/11/21 at 3pm and 6/13/21 at noon

Topic: For a little over two decades, Craig Dougherty has led Sheridan County School District #2 as superintendent. And now he's retiring. Dougherty began his teaching career in Alaska, moving to Montana to teach on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. He came to the Sheridan County School District as an assistant superintendent. Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler spoke with Dougherty about his unique impact on the school district.

Time: 6 min

Date: 6/18/21 at 3pm and 6/20/21 at noon

### **ISSUE: Politics**

Topic: The Wyoming Legislature's 2021 general session is wrapping up. It's been the first session for freshman democrat Representative Karlee Provenza. Provenza represented Laramie and ran on her background with community organizing and her experience with criminal justice reform. Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler spoke with her about how her first session has gone.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/2/21 at 3pm and 4/4/21 at noon

Topic: The Wyoming Legislature just wrapped up a session where \$430 million was cut from the existing budget to make up for major losses of revenue connected with COVID-19. Bob Beck reports on what's next.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/9/21 at 3pm and 4/11/21 at noon

Topic: Local governments watched the 2021 legislative session closely. Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler spoke with Wyoming County Commissioners Association's Executive Director Jerimiah Rieman about how county governments fared in two issues the association was keeping an eye on throughout the session. Rieman began by discussing what changes lawmakers were considering on how local governments get revenue.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/9/21 at 3pm and 4/11/21 at noon

Topic: It's a new day in Washington in terms of energy policy - and that has Wyoming's congressional delegation scrambling to protect the state's fossil fuel industry. Correspondent Matt Laslo has the story from Washington.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/9/21 at 3pm and 4/11/21 at noon

Topic: Some Democrats are prepared to go around Republicans to pass President Joe Biden's more than \$2 trillion infrastructure proposal. That's not sitting well with Wyoming's congressional delegation. Correspondent Matt Laslo has the story from Washington.

Time: 5 min

Date: 5/7/21 at 3pm and 5/9/21 at noon

Topic: Wyoming Congresswoman Liz Cheney was removed from her leadership position as the number three House Republican on Wednesday for criticizing former President Trump's ongoing lies about the 2020 election. Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler spoke with Republicans across the state on how they feel about Cheney and her future.

Time: 5 min

Date: 5/14/21 at 3pm and 5/16/21 at noon

Topic: It's well documented that Wyoming Congresswoman Liz Cheney was voted out as the third ranking Republican in the U.S. House over her differences with President Trump. Today she joins me to discuss this further along with her prospects in the upcoming election.

Time: 12 min

Date: 5/21/21 at 3pm and 5/23/21 at noon

Topic: It turns out that a number of key primary races in Wyoming have been decided without the winner getting over 50 percent of the vote. Some want to see that change and so the legislature's Corporations and Elections Committee has agreed to consider a couple of proposals. Cheyenne Rep. Dan Zwonitzer Co-Chairs the committee and he explains to Bob Beck what they're considering.

Time: 8 min

Date: 6/11/21 at 3pm and 6/13/21 at noon.

## **ISSUE: Environment**

Topic: In Wyoming and many states in the west, water is a precious resource. And as the climate continues to change, it could become even more scarce. Wyoming Public Radio's Ivy Engel has more.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/2/21 at 3pm and 4/4/21 at noon

Topic: The Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team has changed a data point in their calculations for the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem grizzly bear population. This one adjustment shows how past population estimates on the number of grizzlies have been very conservative. Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska asked study team leader Frank Van Manen why make this change now.

Time: 5 min

Date: 5/14/21 at 3pm and 5/16/21 at noon

Topic: Many know that the monarch butterfly is declining. It's linked to human expansion and the rise of global temperatures. But monarchs aren't the only butterflies dealing with these threats. Wyoming Public Radio's Ivy Engel has the story.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/9/21 at 3pm and 4/11/21 at noon

Topic: If you go outside and take a walk, you might sense it's finally spring. If not from the temperatures, or budding grass, you can certainly tell by what you hear. Madelyn Beck reports.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/9/21 at 3pm and 4/11/21 at noon

Topic: Old Faithful geyser is one of the most popular areas in Yellowstone National Park. But a major climate event nearly 800 years ago made the geyser a little less faithful. Wyoming Public Radio's Ivy Engel had a conversation with U.S. Geological Survey research geologist Shaul Hurwitz, who studied this strange period.

Time: 5 min

Date: 5/21/21 at 3pm and 5/23/21 at noon

Topic: When we talk about air quality, we're usually talking about the air outside-- whether it's affected by wildfires, smog, or factory emissions. But those conversations typically end at the front door. The COVID-19 pandemic has made many of us think about indoor air in a whole new way. Wyoming Public Radio's Maggie Mullen reports.

Time: 5 min

Date: 5/21/21 at 3pm and 5/23/21 at noon

Topic: Forecasters predict that by late summer Wyoming may have another rugged fire season. Some early fires are showing signs that those forecasts may be spot on. State Forester Bill Crapser joined Bob Beck to discuss that and how they are planning to address things.

Time: 10 min

Date: 6/11/21 at 3pm and 6/13/21 at noon

### **ISSUE: Native Americans**

Topic: While we all love our pets, in Fremont County there's more dogs than the local shelters know what to do with. Activists on the Wind River Indian Reservation are looking into ways to make the local community more safe for owners and pets. Wyoming Public Radio's Taylor Stagner has more.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/9/21 at 3pm and 4/11/21 at noon

Topic: The idea was to get more students at St. Stephens school interested in becoming fluent in learning Arapaho. Teachers had a plan and then the pandemic hit. Wyoming Public Radio's Taylor Stagner finds out more about a language immersion program that turned to virtual instruction to help save a dying language.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/23/21 at 3pm and 4/25/21 at noon

Topic: The latest coronavirus relief package includes [\\$20 billion](#) for tribal governments -- a potentially transformative infusion of cash. But last year's aid roll-out to Indian Country was badly mismanaged -- and tribal leaders hope the Biden administration has learned from those mistakes. Savannah Maher reports.

Time: 5 min

Date: 5/7/21 at 3pm and 5/9/21 at noon

Topic: Water supplies are so tight in the West that most states keep close watch over every creek, river, ditch and reservoir. A complex web of laws and rules is meant to ensure that all the water that falls within a state's boundaries is put to use or sent downstream to meet the needs of others. Luke Runyon reports.

Time: 5 min

Date: 6/11/21 at 3pm and 6/13/21 at noon.

**ISSUE: Health Care**

Topic: Over 560,000 Americans have died of COVID-19, many of whom left behind children. Wyoming Public Radio's Maggie Mullen has this memorial of Alonso Frias, a father of five in Casper who died last month at the age of 50.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/16/21 at 3pm and 4/18/21 at noon

Topic: Since the start of the pandemic, some Wyoming residents and business owners have indicated that state officials, especially the governor and the state health officer, had a heavy handed approach to health orders. While many people and businesses suffered financially, state officials did try to reduce those impacts.

Time: 8 min

Date: 4/23/21 at 3pm and 4/25/21 at noon

Topic: The COVID-19 pandemic created a lot of changes for those in the foodservice industry. And when statewide health orders were rolled back in mid-March, businesses responded in different ways. Wyoming Public Radio's Ivy Engel has the story.

Time: 4 min

Date: 4/23/21 at 3pm and 4/25/21 at noon

Topic: The pandemic has brought the public health industry into the limelight. Public health officials and employees have been politicized, emotionally abused and threatened by the

public. And for an industry that is not used to this, employees are getting burned out. Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska has more.

Time: 7 min

Date: 4/23/21 at 3pm and 4/25/21 at noon

Topic: The pandemic impact on mental health has been felt by many, from adults to children. But for college students, that may include the entire reshaping of what they thought their college experience would be like. Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler spoke with psychologist and Assistant Director of the University of Wyoming's Counseling Center Julio Brionez on how students are faring during the pandemic.

Time: 7 min

Date: 4/23/21 at 3pm and 4/25/21 at noon

Topic: The Kaiser Family Foundation released a report on sexual and reproductive health, with a focus on how the pandemic may have changed things. Wyoming Public Radio's Maggie Mullen spoke with Brittni Frederiksen, a senior policy analyst for the foundation. She says one thing that really shifted -- was more women getting certain kinds of care from home.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/23/21 at 3pm and 4/25/21 at noon

Topic: Last year, we heard from a first-time, expecting mother who'd be delivering her newborn during a pandemic - something Vanessa Hoene never thought she'd be in. One year later, we check back in with Hoene and some other new moms who shared the same experience. Wyoming Public Radio's Naina Rao reports.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/23/21 at 3pm and 4/25/21 at noon

Topic: Wyoming is among the states with the highest vaccine hesitancy rates in the country. In Natrona County, that's left the local health department with a surplus of vaccines and empty appointment slots. Wyoming Public Radio's Maggie Mullen reports.

Time: 5 min

Date: 5/7/21 at 3pm and 5/9/21 at noon

Topic: After finally passing the Wyoming House of Representatives this year, a legislative committee has set the stage for Medicaid expansion to be debated during an upcoming special session of the legislature. Stefan Johannsen is the Deputy Director of the state Department of Health explains why after seven years the issue has some momentum.

Time: 8 min

Date: 5/14/21 at 3pm and 5/21/21 at noon

Topic: During this year's Wyoming Legislative session, lawmakers cut \$430 million from the state's budget. That includes a \$7.5 million cut from Wyoming Department of Health funds that go to communities across the state for mental health and substance abuse services. In Gillette, those cuts have already led to the closure of a group home for residents with severe mental illnesses. Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler has the story.

Time: 5 min

Date: 5/21/21/ at 3pm and 5/23/21 at noon.

Topic: With the FDA and CDC signing off on kids as young as 12 receiving Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine, young people in Wyoming discuss what's motivating them to get the shot. Madelyn Beck has more.

Time: 4 min

Date: 6/4/21/ at 3pm and 6/6/21 at noon.

Topic: Wyoming has one of the lowest vaccination rates in the country, and that doesn't look like it will change. Wyoming Public Radio's Jeff Victor reports the high number of unvaccinated people in the state has consequences for both individuals and society.

Time: 5 min

Date: 6/18/21/ at 3pm and 6/20/21 at noon.

### **ISSUE: Economy**

Topic: There was curiosity about how the pandemic might impact the housing market in Wyoming... whether folks would downsize or upgrade, whether there would be an influx of buyers or not. Wyoming Public Radio's Cooper McKim spoke with Lingle State Representative Shelley Duncan, who owns a Real Estate Firm to get a feeling for what actually unfolded.

Time: 5 min



Date: 4/23/21 at 3pm and 4/25/21 at noon

Topic: Nonprofits are all over this state, in every industry. They can range from social services, like homeless shelters to art and community centers. And when they can't provide services, communities feel the impacts. COVID-19 has highlighted exactly that. Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler found out how some plan to move into the future.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/23/21 at 3pm and 4/25/21 at noon

Topic: The nationwide Emergency Rental Assistance Program is giving \$25 billion dollars to states, large cities and tribes. Wyoming Public Radio's Jeff Victor reports this program seeks to improve upon previous attempts at rental assistance.

Time: 5 min

Date: 5/21/21 at 3pm and 5/23/21 at noon

Topic: Around the state, businesses are either limiting their hours or closing all together because they can't hire enough employees. This comes as the northwest region is seeing a record number of tourists. Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska looks at the problem in Cody.

Time: 5 min

Date: 6/11/21 at 3pm and 6/13/21 at noon

## **ISSUE: Energy**

Topic: Carbon capture, utilization and storage continue to gain steam across Wyoming. The hope is that carbon capture tech will take off in Wyoming and help offset the cost and emissions of a coal plant - and then keep it open. Wyoming leaders have supported the tech since around 2008, when coal production in the state first began to decline. Energy and Natural Resources reporter Cooper McKim spoke with former Governor Dave Freudenthal about the origins of the state's vision for carbon capture and why it didn't gain traction right away

Time: 10 min

Date: 4/16/21 at 3pm and 4/18/21 at noon

Topic: Wyoming is famous for its wind. And a new urgency to address climate change has ramped up the number of wind projects moving in. But that's spelled more conflicts as communities are split over whether to approve them. Wyoming Public Radio's Melodie Edwards reports.

Time: 5 min

Date: 5/14/21 at 3pm and 5/16/21 at noon

Albany County commissioners took public comment on the Rail Tie Wind Project south of Laramie. It's been a controversial subject that's divided the community and led to hurtful attacks on social media. As part of our series "I Respectfully Disagree," Melodie Edwards sat down with folks on each side of the issue for a civil conversation.

Time: 17 min

Date: 6/4/21 at 3pm and 6/6/21 at noon

#### **ISSUE: Social Issues**

Topic: Last week marked International Transgender Day of Visibility. Here in Wyoming, Casper Pride announced a new fund specifically for Natrona County's transgender community. Wyoming Public Radio's Maggie Mullen spoke with Mallory Pollock from the organization. She says the idea for the project was born out of what the group learned through some local surveying.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/2/21 at 3pm and 4/4/21 at noon

Topic: The past year has shown evidence of an increase in Anti-Asian violence in major cities. All of that escalated when six Asian women were murdered in last month's Atlanta spa shootings. But has that anti-Asian sentiment permeated into smaller, rural areas in the U.S.? If so, what does it look like? Naina Rao has more.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/9/21 at 3pm and 4/11/21 at noon

## **ISSUE: Arts and Culture**

Topic: Ray Jones is a junior at Natrona County High School and this year's Poetry Out Loud state champion, a competition held around the country where high schoolers recite original poems. Wyoming Public Radio's Naina Rao talks with Jones about winning the competition, the national championships, and what got Jones into poetry.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/2/21 at 3pm and 4/4/21 at noon

Topic: Wyoming Public Radio's Taylar Stagner put together a non-narrated piece about a Native business owner in Lander, Wyoming. Sean Francis owns Fremont Music, the only music shop for hours around. He talked about the intense connection he has with music during the pandemic.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/2/21 at 3pm and 4/4/21 at noon

Topic: A Casper-based non-profit, ART 321, is holding its first statewide conference aimed at addressing the health concerns of Wyoming residents through the arts. Wyoming has the highest youth incarceration rate and one of the highest suicide rates in the nation. But the Casper-based nonprofit, ART 321, plans to fight against it using the arts. Wyoming Public Radio's Naina Rao talks with the nonprofit's executive director, Tyler Cessor, about the need for a conference like this right now.

Time: 5 min

Date: 5/7/21 at 3pm and 5/9/21 at noon

Topic: A new exhibit at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West focuses on Black cowboys and rodeos. Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska speaks with photographer Ivan McClellan about his work, and the first black rodeo he went to in Oklahoma.

Time: 5 min

Date: 5/7/21 at 3pm and 5/9/21 at noon

Topic: As more people across the world are getting vaccinated, talks of 'returning to normal' are growing. This can look like attending concerts with friends to gatherings with family for holidays like Easter. But this depiction of normalcy isn't the same for everybody. Wyoming Public Radio's Naina Rao reports how one family is trying to return to their normal, under incredibly challenging circumstances.

Time: 5 min

Date: 5/14/21 at 3pm and 5/16/21 at noon

Topic: Last summer, a modern-day treasure hunt came to an end when New Mexico Art Dealer Forrest Fenn's chest of jewels, gold and pre-Columbian artifacts were found somewhere in Wyoming. Fenn hid the treasure in the Rocky Mountains in 2010, after he was told he was going to die from cancer. Journalist Dan Barbaris broke the news of the identity of the finder of the chest, while writing a book, [\*Chasing the Thrill\*](#), on the treasure hunt. Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska has more.

Time: 7 min

Date: 5/21/21 at 3pm and 5/23/21 at noon

### **ISSUE: Law Enforcement**

Topic: This week Corporal Derek Colling from the Albany County Sheriff's office resigned. Colling shot and killed Laramie resident Robbie Ramirez during a traffic stop in 2018. Ramirez was unarmed. Albany County Sheriff Aaron Appelhans tells Bob Beck that the department is continuing to work on reforms and is focused on regaining trust within the community.

Time: 7 min

Date: 6/4/21 at 3pm and 6/6/21 at noon.

Topic: Over the last 20 years, the number of juveniles incarcerated in Wyoming has led to discussions over whether troubled youth is handled properly in the state. Despite stories of young people who've been improperly treated in Wyoming's juvenile justice system, little in the way of reforms have occurred. Part of the issue has been cost. Also, many prosecutors have opposed statewide reforms and the other problem is the lack of data. This year the legislature's Joint Judiciary Committee is the latest to explore the issue. Cheyenne Senator Tara Nethercott is a co-chair of that committee and she spoke to Bob Beck.

Time: 10 min

Date: 6/18/21 at 3pm and 6/20/21 at noon.

### **ISSUE: Agriculture**

Topic: Wyoming's climate is known to produce fine wool, perfect for spinning into yarn and creating high-quality products. And the University of Wyoming's Department of Agriculture has

its own herd of sheep to study that wool. This year, they're trying something new. Ivy Engle reports.

Time: 5 min

Date: 6/4/21 at 3pm and 6/6/21 at noon.

Topic: Farmers in parts of the West are experiencing some of the worst drought conditions in nearly two decades. The dryness presents challenges in keeping a farm or ranch viable, and in how farmers deal with mental health concerns. Brady Woods has this report.

Time: 4 min

Date: 6/4/21 at 3pm and 6/6/21 at noon.

Topic: Wool that's produced in Wyoming is often sent out of state where it enters a worldwide market. Much of it is sent overseas for production. But one local business is trying to change that. Wyoming Public Radio's Ivy Engel has more.

Time: 6 min

Date: 6/11/21 at 3pm and 6/13/21 at noon.