

WP2 Voting Matters....

A perspective on issues impacting Wyoming businesses and their employees.

Volume I, Issue II

July 2008

Wyoming Prosperity Project

www.bipac.net/Wyoming

WP2 is a non-partisan effort dedicated to research and dissemination of information on matters affecting Wyoming's business and economic climate.

WP2 promotes good government by helping employers and their employees learn about the people and policies that impact their jobs. Tools are available to help shape public policy outcomes.

WP2 hopes to create a more accountable democracy, improved economy and better quality life in Wyoming.

Wyoming Prosperity Project
is an initiative of the
Wyoming Business Alliance

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What Drives Wyoming's Prosperity?

Just ten years ago, Wyoming was challenged with a stagnate economy. The state's population was hovering around 490,000 residents and the climb to reach a half a million appeared beyond reach.

State legislators faced deficit budget situations and efforts were underway via Tax Reform 2000 to reform Wyoming's tax system to support new revenue sources.

By 2007, the state's population had grown to 522,830, job growth of 3.9% was the highest ever and 2nd highest in the U.S. that year. The 10,800 new jobs brought prosperity to Wyoming with over 65% directly attributed to minerals.

Economic prosperity is traditionally driven by manufacturing, mining and industrial growth. As jobs in these sectors grow, personal wealth increases and drives the demand for other products and services. If the growth is strong enough, it drives new home construction, a key economic indicator.

A look back shows that mining jobs in Wyoming grew significantly from 2004-2006. Non-mining jobs, including those in construction, retail and service sectors started to grow in 2006. So while some in Wyoming are resistant to the state's mineral dependence, it is apparent that our prosperity rides on the tails of oil, gas and coal.

Prosperity doesn't come without growing pains, how-

ever. While Wyoming's per capita personal income has grown from 36th in the nation in 1996 to 6th in the nation in 2006, the cost of living for housing in mineral-rich areas has risen. According to the Wyoming Economic Analysis Division, those areas with the highest cost of living in 2007 were also those with the highest population increases.

To offset rising costs, the Wyoming Legislature enacted legislation in 2007 to support new housing start-up costs. This support comes from mineral taxes paid into Wyoming's tax coffers.

Mineral income currently makes up nearly two-thirds of the state's total revenues. This income is derived from severance taxes, federal mineral royalties, mineral property taxes, coal lease bonuses and sales and use taxes.

About \$2.9 billion was collected in mineral taxes by Wyoming in FY07 alone.

These dollars support schools, highways, public infrastructure and other government services. As a benefit to Wyoming's residents, household tax burdens rank amongst the lowest in the nation. Wyoming is only one of five states that does not levy a personal income tax.

While minerals is a powerful driver in the state's prosperity, a healthy economy relies on multiple sources of prosperity. Both tourism and agriculture play important roles in Wyoming's economy as well.

Tourism is the state's second largest employer and accounts for approximately 20% of Wyoming's sales tax collections. Wyoming's national parks, forests and wilderness areas draw over four million tourists year around. Tourism brings in new dollars to the state and is a positive and growing force in

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Wyoming's economy. Tourism impacts virtually every town in Wyoming.

Agriculture production generates income that normally stays in local communities, is a renewable resource, and the source of much of Wyoming's culture. Our agriculture sector not only supports providing food and fiber for the nation, but contributes significantly to Wyoming's economic stability.

Getting to Know Your Elected Representatives

In Wyoming we're fortunate when it comes to access to our elected officials. They are easy to contact and are glad to take the time to sit down for a conversation with constituents.

It is rare when they won't tell you where they stand on an issue, even if they disagree with your position. Many share the philosophy that it isn't necessarily disagreeable to disagree on an issue – it's just the independent thinking of the many individuals who make up our great state.

Plus, they usually want to learn more about your thoughts on issues.

If you don't know who your elected officials are, it is easy to find out. In Wyoming, federal officials – our two Senators and one House member—as well as the top five elected officials, the Governor, Secretary of State, Auditor, Treasurer, and Superintendent of Public Instruction represent all constituents in the state.

State legislators and local officials represent constituents in specific districts, depending on where you live.

To access details on your elected officials, follow these directions:

1. Go to www.bipac.net/wyoming
2. Click the link for "Find Elected Officials"
3. Enter your zip code.
4. Enter your address details and click on the "Narrow" link.

... or call your local County Clerk's office. They can locate your State Senator or Representative as well as provide details on local officials.

Check out the Wyoming Prosperity Project website for details and tips on talking to elected officials.

How Did My Legislator Vote on Issues?

Do you know where your legislator stands on issues? As you prepare for the election, you can learn more about important issues and determine how compatible your legislator is with your viewpoint.

You can access votes on the Wyoming Legislative Service Office (LSO) website at www.legisweb.state.wy.us. Go to the "Session Information Archives" and go to the "Bill Information" link. Here you can find all the bills which are filed during the legislative session. You can access bills and search for those that are of interest.

Once you locate the bills you want, go to the "Votes on Bills and Amendments" icon to access key votes.

Searching the website does take time, but with a bit of practice you can gain access to a multitude of interesting information. You can even listen to archived audio files of the floor debate and discussion.

The Wyoming Prosperity Project tracks votes on issues that are compatible with the guiding principles shown below.

You can access the database of votes at www.bipac.net/wyoming.

The types of votes included in the Wyoming Prosperity Project site are those related to Wyoming's prosperity - typically economic strength, quality of life, infrastructure development, government spending, taxes and public lands.

As you start sifting through voting information, you should keep in mind that votes don't always tell the whole story. Legislative bills can be complex and a "no" vote, for example, may reflect concern over a certain aspect of a bill even though the legislator supports the general philosophy or underlying concept.

Vote in
Wyoming's
Primary
Election

Tuesday
August 19

Get
Registered

Principles of the Wyoming Prosperity Project

- **Progressive wealth**, defined as steady improvement in the economy, return on investments, strong commitments to economic expansion, an increase in private-sector jobs, and competitive pay for Wyoming citizens.
- **Efficient and effective government at the state and local levels**- where the delivery of services and the regulation of the private economy are re-evaluated to ensure that government focuses on essential services.
- **Working partnerships between business, government and the citizens of Wyoming** to create a sense of community that preserves traditional values of opportunity, freedom and independence.
- **A balanced commitment to the quality of Wyoming's environment**, recognizing that natural resource development can be balanced with the preservation of quality air, land, water and wildlife resources.