

SUMMARY of PROCEEDINGS



JOINT TRANSPORTATION, HIGHWAYS & MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING INFORMATION

May 1, 2025

Thyra Thomson State Office Building, Round House Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room 3024
444 W Collins Drive
Casper, Wyoming

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Stephan Pappas, Co-Chairman

Representative Landon Brown, Co-Chairman

Senator Jim Anderson

Senator Evie Brennan

Senator Ed Cooper

Senator John Kolb

Representative Rob Geringer

Representative Lloyd Larsen

Representative Bob Nicholas

Representative Ivan Posey

Representative Reuben Tarver

COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

Representative Dalton Banks

Representative Darin McCann

Representative Cody Wylie

LEGISLATIVE SERVICE OFFICE STAFF

TaLise Hansen, Staff Attorney

Eve Hamilton, Legislative Editor

OTHERS PRESENT AT MEETING

Please refer to **Appendix 1-02** to review the Committee Sign-in Sheet for a list of other individuals who attended the meeting.

The Committee Meeting Summary of Proceedings (meeting minutes) is prepared by the Legislative Service Office (LSO) and is the official record of the proceedings of a legislative committee meeting. This document does not represent a transcript of the meeting; it is a digest of the meeting and provides a record of official actions taken by the Committee. All meeting materials and handouts provided to the Committee by the Legislative Service Office, public officials, lobbyists, and the public are on file at the Legislative Service Office and are part of the official record of the meeting. An index of these materials is provided at the end of this document, and these materials are on file at the Legislative Service Office. For more information or to review meeting materials, please contact the Legislative Service Office at (307) 777-7881 or by e-mail at lso@wyoleg.gov. The Summary of Proceedings for each legislative committee meeting can be found on the Wyoming Legislature's website at www.wyoleg.gov.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Joint Transportation, Highways & Military Affairs Committee (Committee) met for one day in Casper to begin its interim work. The Committee received testimony from the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT), who provided an agency overview, information on agency and road funding, an emergency response update, a road project overview, an update on WyoLink, and an update from the Wyoming Highway Patrol (WHP). The Committee received information from the United States Department of Defense (DOD) State Liaison Office on the DOD's state policy priorities related to the military and military personnel. The Committee received testimony from the Wyoming Military Department (WMD), who provided reports and updates on the Wyoming National Army and Air Guard and suggested statutory updates. The Committee received information from the Legislative Service Office (LSO) and the WMD on veterans' benefits matters. The next Committee meeting is scheduled for August 18-19, 2025, in Casper.

The Committee requested bill drafts regarding Wyoming National Guard member referral incentive program, re-enlistment bonus program, reimbursement for burials of indigent veterans, and limited liability for firearm hold agreements. The Committee requested LSO provide a memorandum on English language proficiency requirements for persons with commercial driver's licenses (CDLs). The Committee created a working group on fuel taxes.

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 8:31 AM. The following sections summarize the Committee proceedings by topic. Please refer to [Appendix 1-01](#) to review the Committee Meeting Agenda. The meeting can be viewed on YouTube – Joint Transportation, Highways & Military Affairs Committee Meeting, May 1, 2025 ([AM](#) and [PM](#)).

Adoption of Interim Committee Rules

The Committee adopted Interim Committee Rules by a voice vote ([Appendix 1-03](#)).

WYOMING DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION - AGENCY OVERVIEW

Agency Overview

Director Darin Westby, WYDOT, provided an agency overview including the organization of WYDOT, the current numbers of employees and employee vacancies, and WYDOT's recruitment and retention efforts ([Appendix 2-01, pages 3-9](#)).

Agency Funding and Road Funding

Director Westby and Rodney Freier Jr., Budget Manager, WYDOT, provided a brief overview of agency funding including historical total revenue trends, anticipated federal and state revenue for fiscal year 2025, and how federal and state funding may be spent for certain projects ([Appendix 2-01, pages 10-19](#)).

The Committee requested WYDOT provide information on the anticipated revenue increase from the enactment of 2025 House Bill 33 Vehicle sales and use tax distribution-highway fund and provide information on federal funding for highway construction projects and the connection between inflation and the State's buying power.

Emergency Response Update

Keith Fulton, Chief Engineer, WYDOT, provided an emergency response update on several emergency situations across the state over the last year, including the Teton Pass mudslide, the Green River tunnel multi-vehicle accident, and the multiple wildfires throughout the state([Appendix 2-01, pages 20-32](#)).

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Road Project Overview

Mr. Fulton provided background information on the State Highway Improvement Program (STIP) including how many projects are currently listed for fiscal years 2023 through 2025 and a brief description of the types of projects ([Appendix 2-01, pages 33-37](#)). Mr. Fulton further discussed WYDOT's inventory including the miles of highways and the number of bridges, tunnels, structures, guardrails, signs, and piece of equipment that WYDOT maintains.

WyoLink Update

Nathan Smolinski, Chief Technology Officer, WYDOT, provided an overview and update of WyoLink, including how WyoLink works, who uses the services, and where towers for WyoLink are located throughout the State ([Appendix 2-02](#) and [Appendix 2-03](#)).

Wyoming Highway Patrol Update

Colonel Timothy Cameron, Lieutenant Colonel Karl Germain, Captain Sean Dickerson, and Major Casey Ramsey, WHP, provided an overview of the WHP ([Appendix 2-01, pages 38-41](#)). Col. Cameron explained that the WHP has made several organizational changes, including restructuring WHP's districts from five to four and removing extra duties and projects from WHP Lieutenants and Captains. Col. Cameron also testified on WHP's employee numbers and employee vacancies, described WHP's recruitment and retention efforts, and provided a brief overview of Division O within WHP.

The Committee requested WHP provide information on the statewide percentage of employee turnover for the past two years and four years, the potential relocation of dispatchers due to the lease and location of the building that houses the dispatchers, and a breakdown of middle management and how middle management has moved due to organizational changes within WHP.

Public Comment

Jonathan Russel, Policy Analyst, Wyoming County Commissioners Association; Tom Ryan, Hot Springs County Commissioner; Keven Hawley, President and CEO, Wyoming Trucking Association; and David Rhoades, President, Wyoming Towing and Recovery Professionals all provided public comment on WYDOT's agency overview.

Committee Directives

The Committee requested that WYDOT provide information on how license plates are issued at the next meeting and requested that LSO provide information on the English language proficiency requirements for persons with CDL's.

The Committee created a working group on fuel taxes with two senators and two representatives to be appointed by the Co-Chairmen at a later date.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE - AGENCY OVERVIEW

Tammie Perreault, Northwest Regional Liaison, DOD, presented slides about the DOD State Liaison Office's state policy priorities related to the military and military personnel including explaining current issues military families throughout the country face, and suggested statutory changes ([Appendix 4-01](#), [Appendix 4-02](#), [Appendix 4-03](#), and [Appendix 4-04](#)).

WYOMING MILITARY DEPARTMENT - AGENCY OVERVIEW

General Gregory Porter, Adjutant General, WMD, provided an agency overview, including updates on deployments, missions, and force readiness for the Wyoming Air and Army National Guard (**Appendix 6-01, pages 3-5**).

Statutory Update Overview

Lieutenant Colonel Paul Leone, WMD, proposed two statutory changes for the Committee's consideration (**Appendix 6-01, page 6-16**). Lt. Col. Leone proposed updating the Wyoming National Guard Member Referral Incentive Program by increasing the current referral bonus from \$500 to \$1,000, which would require an appropriation of \$250,000 per biennium, and extending the program's sunset date to July 1, 2028. Lt. Col. Leone also proposed creating a state-funded re-enlistment bonus program for the Wyoming National Air and Army Guard, which would offer a \$5,000 reenlistment bonus for members of the Wyoming National Air and Army Guard who re-enlist for at least three years.

Co-Chairman Pappas asked for public comment and no public comment was provided.

Committee Directives

The Committee voted to direct LSO to draft a bill amending the Wyoming National Guard Member Referral Incentive Program by increasing the referral bonus from \$500 to \$1,000, providing an appropriation of \$250,000 for the biennium, and extending the program's sunset date to July 1, 2028.

The Committee voted to direct LSO to draft a bill creating a state funded re-enlistment bonus program for the Wyoming National Air and Army Guard, which would offer a \$5,000 bonus for members of the Wyoming National Air and Army Guard who re-enlist for at least three years.

WYOMING VETERANS' COMMISSION - AGENCY OVERVIEW AND UPDATE

Timothy Sheppard, Executive Director, Wyoming Veterans Commission (Commission), provided an overview of the Commission's work including the funding for the Veterans Feeding Veterans program, information on the Oregon Trail State Veterans Cemetery, funding for the Highly Rural Transportation Program, and the success of the Veterans Talking to Veterans Program (**Appendix 6-01, page 18**).

Statutory Update Overview

Mr. Sheppard proposed amending the statute regarding the reimbursement to counties for the preparation and transportation of indigent veterans for burial in a veteran's cemetery by removing the requirement that the indigent veteran must have served in any war or conflict as defined by federal law (**Appendix 6-01, page 17**).

Co-Chairman Pappas asked for public comment and no public comment was provided.

Committee Directives

The Committee voted to direct LSO to draft a bill to remove the requirement that indigent veteran must have served in any war or conflict before counties may receive reimbursement for preparing and transporting the veteran for burial in a veteran's cemetery.

COMPENSATION FOR VETERANS' BENEFITS MATTERS

TaLise Hansen, Staff Attorney, LSO, provided an overview of veterans' benefits matters and who is eligible to receive compensation for advising or assisting veterans seeking benefits under current federal and state

law (**Appendix 8-01**). Ms. Hansen also provided information on how other states are approaching veterans' benefits matters and people receiving compensation for providing such services.

Public Comment

Mr. Sheppard and Col. Karen Hinkle, WMD, provided public comment on veterans' benefits matters.

Denton Knapp, Veterans in Foreign Wars (VFW), provided public comment and explained that several other states have enacted legislation to prohibit persons who are not accredited by the federal government to receive compensation for providing services regarding veteran benefits matters. He further discussed how this legislation is necessary to prevent unqualified persons from taking advantage of veterans by offering to process their benefits claims, resulting in many veterans losing their benefits in the process (**Appendix 8-02 and Appendix 8-03**).

Joey Correnti, Peter O'Rourke, President, National Association for Veterans Rights; and William Taylor, Chief Operating Officer, Veterans Guardian VA Claims Consulting, provided public comment on the federal law, explained how other states that have enacted legislation prohibiting compensation has been challenged in the courts as being unconstitutional, and recommended the Committee draft legislation similar to states who provide guardrails to protect veterans but do not prohibit unaccredited persons from receiving compensation for providing such services.

Committee Directives

The Committee requested that Mr. Knapp, Mr. O'Rourke, and Mr. Taylor provide information to the Committee on how legislation in other states have aided or hindered veterans who are seeking to claim benefits and provide an update on the court cases on this topic.

ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE ACTIONS

The Committee voted to direct LSO to resurrect 2025 Senate File 29 Firearms holds agreement – limited liability for consideration at the next meeting.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Co-Chairman Pappas adjourned the meeting at 4:47 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Landon Brown

Committee Meeting Materials Index

Index Number	Agenda Item	Document Description	Document Provider
1-01		Agenda	Legislative Service Office
1-02		Sign-In Sheet	Legislative Service Office
1-03	Call to Order	Adopted Interim Rules	Legislative Service Office
2-01	Wyoming Department of Transportation - Agency Overview	WYDOT Agency Overview	Wyoming Department of Transportation
2-02	Wyoming Department of Transportation - Agency Overview	WyoLink Overview	Wyoming Department of Transportation
2-03	Wyoming Department of Transportation - Agency Overview	WyoLink Local Towers and Locations Site Map	Wyoming Department of Transportation
4-01	Department of Defense - Agency Overview	Defense-State Liaison Office Update	Department of Defense, Defense-State Liaison Office
4-02	Department of Defense - Agency Overview	Navigating Special Education as a Military Family: A Focus on School Aged Children	Department of Defense, Defense-State Liaison Office
4-03	Department of Defense - Agency Overview	2021 Survey: Active Duty Spouse Employment and Education	Department of Defense, Defense-State Liaison Office
4-04	Department of Defense - Agency Overview	2023 Demographics Profile: Air Force/Space Force Families	Department of Defense, Defense-State Liaison Office
6-01	Wyoming Military Department - Agency Overview	Wyoming Military Department Update and Statutory Overview	Wyoming Military Department

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8-01	Compensation for Veterans' Benefits Matters	Topic Summary: Veteran's Benefits Matters and Receiving Compensation for Providing Service	Legislative Service Office
8-02	Compensation for Veterans' Benefits Matters	"Don't Feed The Sharks" Informational Handout	Veterans of Foreign Wars
8-03	Compensation for Veterans' Benefits Matters	Cracking Down on Predatory Claims Companies	Veterans of Foreign Wars

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