

2025 Legislative Session: A Year of New Faces and High Volume

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The 2025 Legislative Session brought significant shifts to Wyoming's Capitol, with approximately two-thirds of legislators serving fewer than two terms and the Freedom Caucus securing a majority position. This new dynamic, combined with a whopping 555 bills introduced—the most in the last 24 years—created both challenges and opportunities for building relationships and finding common ground. One key lesson this session was the importance of not making assumptions about voting patterns or positions. Despite the Freedom Caucus majority, several environmental and resource bills found unexpected allies.

Overall, Powder River should be extremely proud of the results we achieved during the session. We celebrated the defeat of fifteen bills we actively opposed including HB16 regarding used nuclear fuel storage. This bill would have allowed the disposal of high-level nuclear waste in Wyoming, creating significant environmental risks for future generations. Ensuring that the Legislature did not authorize nuclear waste storage without careful consideration of the risks and impacts was one of Powder River's two top priorities. While the bill passed the Senate, the House Minerals committee said "no" in large part due to the effective testimony and lobbying by Powder River.

The latest attempt to attack net metering (SF111) would have created barriers for residents and businesses wanting to install solar or small wind systems. This bill proposed a two-tier system that would have punished new installations and given utilities control over customer compensation rates. Through engagement from our members and allies, this anti-rooftop solar bill was defeated on third reading in the Senate.

The good net metering bill (HB183) that we had promoted unfortunately was amended in a way that Powder River and other renewable energy advocates could not support. As designed, this agricultural-backed bill sponsored by members of the Freedom Caucus would benefit non-residential net metered customers by increasing the system cap to 200kW and allowing for multiple meters on a single property. The bill initially flew through the House with 56 to 4 vote on the floor. However, complications arose in the Senate. The Senate Minerals committee added an amendment giving the Public Service Commission (PSC) authority to

set rates for all net metered customers, including residential. This strikes a section of the 2001 net metering statute that provides protection to net metered customers from additional fees. Additional amendments on third reading before the full Senate, including one exempting co-ops from PSC oversight, made the bill unacceptable. In the end, the bill as amended failed to pass as 16 voted against it compared to the 15 who supported it. While we lost the opportunity for positive action on net-metering, we avoided losing ground and moving backward on the issue.

We saw seven other bills that we supported die before passage. Among these casualties was HB59, which would have modified Wyoming law regarding limited mining operations and expanded water quality testing requirements for small-scale mining activities. Many bills failed due to the session's limited timeframe and high volume of bills, highlighting the challenge of moving legislation through both chambers with so many competing priorities.

Agricultural issues remained part of Powder River's legislative work. Two key bills we supported passed and have been signed by the Governor. SF84 establishes country of origin labeling for Wyoming-born, raised, and processed beef, providing consumers with transparent information about their food sources. SF64 continued our long-standing opposition to federal mandates by rejecting requirements for electronic identification of cattle crossing state lines – a position Powder River has advocated for years.

We extend our deepest gratitude to all of you for your involvement in Powder River's work by contacting legislators, speaking at committee

meetings, and advocating on issues that matter to you and our state. Powder River's success during the session would not have happened without you or Nancy McCann who delivered strategic and powerful lobbying. And a particularly HUGE thanks to member Jill Morrison who threw herself "all in" to setting us up in Cheyenne and steering our engagement. When citizens spoke with knowledge and passion about Wyoming's resources and future, legislators listened.

As we transition to the interim committee work already underway, we face opportunities to shape policy development before the next legislative session. Several issues ranging from water quality protection and nuclear energy development to mining regulations will receive in-depth study in the coming months. By continuing to engage year-round—not just during the legislative session—we strengthen our collective voice for responsible resource development and environmental protection in Wyoming.

