

# Legislature faces finance issues

by Cindy Glasson

This week marks the opening session for this round of the 64th Wyoming State Legislature in Cheyenne and our Representative, Nathan Winters, gives us a little insight into some of the things that will be coming up over the next several weeks.

Winters said the legislature is looking at a number of issues regarding the finances for Wyoming. “Thankfully,” Winters said, “after the last economic low in the 1990’s, the legislature made the decision to set aside money for the next fiscal downturn. We have just endured the fastest drop in the economy that our state has ever faced and we are feeling the effect in Hot Springs County.”

This session they will be spending extra effort on the subject of school funding. Winters said the state will be looking at a funding shortfall somewhere between \$360 and \$400 million dollars.

According to a recent report from the Legislative Service Office, mineral production and the taxes paid by energy producers, fund approximately 65% of the K-12 education operations for Wyoming’s schools.

Winters said the legislature will have many decisions to make on how to best face this drop in school funds.

As the new vice-chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Winters is working diligently on Criminal Justice reform.

“Through the interim last year, we received hours of testimony from citizens, agencies, prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges and the Attorney General’s office on this important topic,” he said. “I am honored now with the new role on that committee and I will be doing a lot of the ‘on-the-ground’ work as these bills are ushered through the process.”

Along with his additional committee work, Winters is sponsoring a couple of bills on the floor as well.

“I am working to help young teachers and schools with a bill that provides more local control in contracting with new teachers,” he said. “I believe this is important for all parties as it gives the administrators and school boards more opportunity to help young teachers excel in their vocation.”

His second bill utilizes Article V of the U.S. Constitution to reassert the rights of states when the Federal Government overreaches as it has increasingly done over the past several decades.

If you would like to keep track of this session’s bills, both for the House and the Senate, please refer to [legisweb.state.wy.us](http://legisweb.state.wy.us). From there you may view all the bills, session activities and legislator information.



photo by **Cindy Glasson**

## Swingin’ good time

Kindergartner Rilynn Pinkston looks to be having a ball Monday as she swings during lunch at Ralph Witters Elementary. Kylie Olsen got her moving, but stuck around just to hear Rilynn's giggle as she flew through the air. Recorded temperatures on Monday show Thermopolis hit a high of 51 degrees.

# Daniels named top principal

by Lara Love

Thermopolis Middle School Principal Breez Longwell Daniels has been selected as Wyoming’s 2017 National Distinguished Principal (NDP).

Kenny Jones, Wyoming Association of Elementary and Middle School Principals (WAEMSP) executive director, and Mitch Craft, Wyoming’s 2016 NDP, made the announcement Monday morning in the commons in front of TMS staff and students.

“This award is possible because of all of us,” said Daniels as she accepted the honor. She reminded staff and students that their hard work made it all possible.

Daniels was nominated and selected by fellow principals through a statewide search process conducted by WAEMSP, according to Jones.

Criteria for selection of the principals require that the honorees are active principals of schools where programs are designed to meet the academic and social needs of all students. There also must be firmly established community ties with parents and local business organizations.

“I am extremely proud of her, her staff and the students of TMS. This award is a great

reflection of not only TMS, but the district as a whole,” said Hot Springs County School District Superintendent Dustin Hunt.

Daniels will travel to Washington, D.C. in October for two days of activities to honor and bring recognition to the elementary and middle-level educators chosen by the states,

the District of Columbia, plus private and overseas schools.

“In her five years as principal of Thermopolis Middle School, Breez Daniels has made a positive and lasting impact on student learning. Her commitment to fostering systematic teacher collaboration and high quality instruction has taken hold among her staff. The impact is clearly measurable in TMS student results. Daniels doesn’t just talk the talk, she

is a change agent who walks the walk and is making a difference for kids in her community,” said Craft.

Daniels is an active member of the community, serving on the Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital Board and volunteering through 4-H and FFA.

Daniels is a graduate of the University of Wyoming. She previously held the position of technology instructional facilitator and was technology director prior to taking over the reins at TMS.

“At the helm of every successful school is a successful principal,” said Gail Connelly, NAESP’s executive director. “Our program provides us with an opportunity to recognize the outstanding leadership of these principals and their community to creating successful learning communities. Because of them, students thrive academically, teachers grow professionally and communities are strengthened.”

Since 1956, the WAEMSP has served as Wyoming’s professional education association and now represents 234 elementary and middle school principals and aspiring principals throughout the state.



Breez Longwell Daniels was named Wyoming's 2017 National Distinguished Principal. Helping her show TMS students and staff the banner which will hang in the school is last year's NDP Mitch Craft. WAEMSP Executive Director Kenny Jones explained displaying the banner and plaque at TMS will have to wait until the official awards ceremony in October.

# Agar looks forward to representing district 20

by Mark Dykes

On the afternoon of Jan. 5, Senate District 20 representative Wyatt Agar was already on his way to Cheyenne for the 2017 Legislature which convened on Jan. 10.

Being something of a “new guy” at the session, Agar said there would, of course, be a learning curve, particularly when stepping into the state’s current fiscal situation. However, he’s encouraged to be there with representatives Nathan Winters and Mike Greear, as well Senate President Eli Bebout, all of whom are willing to share their knowledge to add to his base.

Agar added he is a big fan of learning something new every day, as it is a sign one is truly living.

With regard to the fiscal situation, Agar said they have to face the reality that the funds are not there, and make the money we do have work us through constructive investments. He further added he’s visited with Winters and Greear about such opportunities, but declined to share anything at this time.

Agar also wants to ensure he represents his constituency well and keep to his campaign promise of repealing some of the burdensome regulations that are stifling small businesses.

As for sponsorship of bills, Agar said he is one of the few legislators not sponsoring or co-sponsoring anything. One of the worst things someone in his position can do, he added, is to muddy everything up just to say he sponsored a bill. There are some he’s paying attention to, such as HB0050, limitations on delegates-constitution amendment conventions.

Agar said he’s been entrusted with the honor of being the district’s representative and plans to perform well in that capacity. He appreciates any and all feedback and comments.