



HISTORICAL FACTS ABOUT THE WYOMING LEGISLATURE

SOURCE: WYOMING BLUE BOOKS

Establishing the Territorial Legislature

- The Territorial Legislative Assembly was composed of the Territorial Council (known today as the Senate) and House of Representatives from 1869-1890. The legislative power was vested in the Governor and the Assembly.
- The first Territorial election was called by proclamation for September 2, 1869.
- The first Territorial election called by law was for September 6, 1871.
- The first Territorial Legislative Assembly convened by proclamation on October 12, 1869.
- The first Territorial Legislative Assembly to convene by law convened November 7, 1871.
- Members of the Legislative Assembly were elected by the qualified voters of the territory.
- On August 3, 1869, the Governor issued a proclamation calling for an election to be held on September 2, 1869 to elect the members of the Legislative Assembly.
- The election laws of 1869 stipulated that members of the Legislative Assembly were to be elected at the general election of 1871. Members were elected for two years.
- The Organic Act fixed the number of members of the Legislative Assembly; the Council was to consist of nine members, which could be increased to 13, and the House of Representatives was to consist of 13 members, which could be increased to 27. These numbers did not change in 1869, 1871, nor in 1873.
- The Assembly of 1873 provided for an increase of members in the 1875 Legislative Assembly to 40, which continued until 1879.
- In 1878, Congress passed an act fixing the number of members of the Legislative Assembly of the several Territories during the time period, including Wyoming. The Council was not to exceed 12 members and the House of Representatives not to exceed 24. Beginning with the Legislative Assembly of 1882, this number remained in force until Wyoming became a state in 1890.

Time to Convene: First Legislative Assembly

- On September 22, 1869 the Governor issued a proclamation fixing the time for the First Territorial Legislative Assembly to convene, which was Tuesday, October 12, 1869.
- The day and year set for the Legislative Assembly to convene were fixed by an act of the 1869 Legislative Assembly as the first Tuesday of November in 1871 and the first Tuesday of November in every second year thereafter.

- The Legislative Assembly of 1879 changed the day and year for the Assembly to convene to the second Tuesday of January 1882, and on the second Tuesday of January every second year thereafter. By this act, the Legislative Assembly convened in even numbered years. There was no session of the Assembly from the Sixth Assembly in November 1879 until the Seventh Assembly in January 1882.
- The Organic Act provided the term of the Legislative Assembly to be 40 days, except the first session which could be extended to 60 days. On November 20, 1869, the Legislative Assembly adopted a resolution extending this session to 60 days.
- By an act of Congress, December 23, 1880, the term of the legislative session was extended to 60 days. This went into effect January 1882, and continued until statehood.

Compensation of Territorial Members:

- The Organic Act provided that each member of the Legislative Assembly was entitled to receive four dollars per day during their attendance at sessions, and three dollars for every 20 miles traveled in going to and returning from the sessions.
- By an act of Congress January 23, 1873, the members of the Legislative Assembly each received compensation of six dollars a day during the session, while the allowance for traveling to and from the sessions remained the same.
- On June 19, 1878, Congress repealed the act of January 23, 1873, changing the compensation of members of the Legislative Assembly from six dollars a day to four dollars a day. The travel expenses remained the same. The members of the legislative assembly received four dollars a day from 1882 to 1890 when Wyoming adopted the Constitution in July 1890 and became a state.

Territorial Legislative Assemblies Session Dates and Locations:

- The first Legislative Assembly was held in Cheyenne, October 12, 1869 through December 10, 1869 in the Thomas McLeland Building, located on the southeast corner of 17th Street and Carey Avenue. It was in this building where Woman's Suffrage was born.
- The second Legislative Assembly was held in Cheyenne, November 7, 1871 through December 16, 1871 in the Rollins House, located on the north side of 16th Street, midway between Carey and Pioneer Avenues.
- The third Legislative Assembly was held in Cheyenne, November 4, 1873 through December 12, 1873 in the Court House, located on the northwest corner of 19th Street and Carey Avenue.
- The fourth Legislative Assembly was held in Cheyenne, November 5, 1875 through December 1, 1875 in the Frank Meanea's Building, located at 218 West 17th Street.
- The fifth Legislative Assembly was held in Cheyenne, November 6, 1877 through December 15, 1877 in the Bon Block, at 345 West 16th Street.
- The sixth Legislative Assembly was held in Cheyenne, November 4, 1879 through December 13, 1879 in the McDaniels Building, located at 1615 Pioneer Avenue.

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- The seventh Legislative Assembly was held in Cheyenne, January 10, 1882 through March 10, 1882 in the Opera House Block, located at the northwest corner of 17th Street and Capitol Avenue.
- The eighth Legislative Assembly was held January 8, 1884 through March 7, 1884, in the Commercial Block, located at 218 ½ West 16th Street.
- The ninth Legislative Assembly was held in Cheyenne, January 12, 1886 through March 12, 1886, in the Knights of Pythias Hall, located at 312 West 17th Street.
- The tenth Legislative Assembly was held in Cheyenne, January 10, 1888 through March 9, 1888, in the Capitol Building.
- The eleventh Legislative Assembly was held on January 15, 1890 through March 14, 1890, in the Capitol Building.

The First State Election and Legislative Statistics

- The first State election was called by proclamation for September 11, 1890.
- The first State election was called by law for November 8, 1892.
- The first State Legislature convened by proclamation on November 12, 1890.
- The first State Legislature to convene by law was on January 10, 1893.
- In 1890, there were two legislative sessions held. The Eleventh, which was the last Territorial Legislative Assembly, convened January 14, 1890 and adjourned March 14, 1890. The first State Legislature convened November 12, 1890 and adjourned January 10, 1891.
- The Wyoming State Constitution was debated and drafted in the Capitol's restored two-story room on the north side of the building off of the Rotunda on the second and third floors. This space also housed the Territorial Assembly and Wyoming Supreme Court in the past.
- Under the provisions of the new Wyoming Constitution, the legislative authority was vested in the State Legislature, which consists of a Senate and a House of Representatives.
- Members of both houses were elected by the qualified voters of the State every two years. Their terms began on the first Monday of January following the general election. Both the number of senators and the number of representatives are apportioned by the State Legislature among the several counties or legislative districts of the State according to the number of inhabitants in each.
- No member of the Legislature, during the term for which he is elected, can be appointed to any civil office under the State, and no person holding an office under the United States or this State, can be a member of either house during his continuance in office.
- When vacancies occurred in either house they are filled for the remainder of the term by special election called by proclamation of the governor.

Historical Facts about the Wyoming Legislature

The Wyoming Senate

- The State Senate, considered the upper house of the Legislature, is today composed of 30 members, who are elected by the qualified voters of their respective districts, for a term of four years.
- The number of members in the Senate is controlled by the Legislature through apportionment based on population.
- A senator must be a citizen of the United States, 25 years of age, and have lived at least 12 months next preceding the election within the county or district in which he/she was elected. The Senate elects one of its members “President of the Senate,” chooses its own officers, and establishes its own set of rules.
- The Senate also confirms such appointments of the governor as the law requires of it; shares the responsibility with the House of Representatives for legislation, and sits as a court of impeachment of State and judicial officers, except justice of the peace.

The Wyoming House

- The State House of Representatives is today composed of 60 members, who are elected by the qualified voters of their respective counties or districts, for a term of two years.
- By constitutional provisions the number of members of the House of Representatives is never to be less than twice nor greater than three times the number of members of the Senate.
- Legislative apportionment based on population controls the number of members in the House of Representatives.
- A member of the House must be a citizen of the United States, 21 years of age, and have lived at least 12 months next preceding the election within the county or district in which he or she is elected.
- Members of the House elect a “Speaker of the House,” chooses their own officers, and establishes their own set of rules.
- The House has sole power of impeachment of State and judicial officers except justice of the peace and shares responsibility with the Senate for legislation. The constitution also provides that all revenue bills must originate in the House.

Statehood Legislature Dates and Members

- First State Legislature, November 12, 1890 through January 10, 1891; included 16 members in the Senate and 33 members in the House
- Second State Legislature, January 10, 1893 through February 18, 1893; included 16 members in the Senate and 33 members in the House
- Third State Legislature, January 8, 1895 through February 16, 1895; included 18 members in the Senate and 37 members in the House

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- Fourth State Legislature, January 12, 1897 through February 20, 1897; included 19 members in the Senate and 38 members in the House
- Fifth State Legislature, January 10, 1899 through February 18, 1899; included 19 members in the Senate and 38 members in the House
- Sixth State Legislature, January 8, 1901 through February 16, 1901; included 19 members in the Senate and 38 members in the House
- Seventh State Legislature, January 13, 1903 through February 21, 1903; included 23 members in the Senate and 50 members in the House
- Eighth State Legislature, January 10, 1905 through February 18, 1905; included 23 members in the Senate and 50 members in the House
- Ninth State Legislature, January 8, 1907 through February 16, 1907; included 23 members in the Senate and 50 members in the House
- Tenth State Legislature, January 12, 1909 through February 20, 1909; included 27 members in the Senate and 56 members in the House
- Eleventh State Legislature, January 10, 1911 through February 18, 1911; included 27 members in the Senate and 56 members in the House
- Twelfth State Legislature, January 14, 1913 through February 22, 1913; included 27 members in the Senate and 57 members in the House
- Thirteenth State Legislature, January 12, 1915 through February 20, 1915; included 27 members in the Senate and 57 members in the House
- Fourteenth State Legislature, January 9, 1917 through February 17, 1917; included 27 members in the Senate and 57 members in the House
- Fifteenth State Legislature, January 14, 1919 through February 22, 1919; included 27 members in the Senate and 54 members in the House
- Sixteenth State Legislature, January 11, 1921 through February 19, 1921; included 25 members in the Senate and 54 members in the House
- Seventeenth State Legislature, January 9, 1923 through February 17, 1923; included 25 members in the Senate and 60 members in the House
- Eighteenth State Legislature, January 13, 1925 through February 21, 1925; included 27 members in the Senate and 62 members in the House
- Nineteenth State Legislature, January 11, 1927 through February 19, 1927; included 27 members in the Senate and 62 members in the House
- Twentieth State Legislature, January 8, 1929 through February 16, 1929; included 27 members in the Senate and 62 members in the House
- Twenty-First State Legislature, January 13, 1931 through February 21, 1931; included 27 members in the Senate and 62 members in the House

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- Twenty-Second State Legislature, January 10, 1933 through February 18, 1933; included 27 members in the Senate and 62 members in the House
- Twenty-Third State Legislature, January 8, 1935 through February 16, 1935; included 27 members in the Senate and 56 members in the House
- Twenty-Fourth State Legislature, January 12, 1937 through February 20, 1937; included 27 members in the Senate and 56 members in the House
- Twenty-Fifth State Legislature, January 10, 1939 through February 18, 1939; included 27 members in the Senate and 56 members in the House
- Twenty-Sixth State Legislature, January 14, 1941 through February 22, 1941; included 27 members in the Senate and 56 members in the House
- Twenty-Seventh State Legislature, January 12, 1943 through February 20, 1943; included 27 members in the Senate and 56 members in the House
- Twenty-Eighth State Legislature, January 9, 1945; included 27 members in the Senate and 55 members in the House.
- Twenty-Ninth State Legislature, January 14, 1947; included 27 members in the Senate and 56 members in the House.
- Thirtieth State Legislature, January 11, 1949; included 27 members in the Senate and 56 members in the House.
- Thirty-first Legislature, January 9, 1951; included 27 members in the Senate and 56 members in the House.
- Thirty-second Legislature, January 13, 1953; included 27 members in the Senate and 56 members in the House.
- Thirty-third Legislature, January 1, 1955; included 27 members in the Senate and 56 members in the House.
- Thirty-fourth Legislature, January 8, 1957; included 27 members in the Senate and 56 members in the House.
- Thirty-fifth Legislature, January 13, 1959; included 27 members in the Senate and 56 members in the House.
- Thirty-sixth Legislature, January 10, 1961; included 27 members in the Senate and 56 members in the House.
- Thirty-seventh Legislature, January 8, 1963; included 27 members in the Senate and 56 members in the House.
- Thirty-eighth Legislature, January 12, 1965; included 25 members in the Senate and 61 members in the House.
- Thirty-ninth Legislature, January 10, 1967; included 30 members in the Senate and 61 members in the House.

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- Fortieth State Legislature, January 14, 1969; included 30 members in the Senate and 61 members in the House.
- Forty-first Legislature, January 12, 1971; included 30 members in the Senate and 61 members in the House.
- Forty-second Legislature, January 9, 1973; included 30 members in the Senate and 62 members in the House.
- Forty-third Legislature, Regular Session convened January 14, 1975; Budget Session convened February 10, 1976. Included 30 members in the Senate and 62 members in the House.
- Forty-fourth Legislature, Regular Session convened January 11, 1977; Budget Session convened February 14, 1978. Included 30 members in the Senate and 62 members in the House.
- Forty-fifth Legislature, Regular Session convened January 9, 1979; Budget Session convened February 12, 1980. Included 30 members in the Senate and 62 members in the House.
- Forty-sixth Legislature, Regular Session convened January 13, 1981; Budget Session convened February 9, 1982. Included 30 members in the Senate and 62 members in the House.
- Forty-seventh Legislature, Regular Session convened January 11, 1983; Budget Session convened February 14, 1984. Included 30 members in the Senate and 64 members in the House.
- Forty-eighth Legislature, Regular Session convened January 8, 1985; Budget Session convened February 17, 1986. Included 30 members in the Senate and 64 members in the House.
- Forty-ninth Legislature, Regular Session convened January 13, 1987; Budget Session convened February 15, 1988. Included 30 members in the Senate and 64 members in the House.
- Fiftieth Legislature, Regular Session convened January 10, 1989; Budget Session convened February 19, 1990. Included 30 members in the Senate and 64 members in the House.
- Fifty-first Legislature, Regular Session convened January 8, 1991; Budget Session convened February 10, 1992. Included 30 members in the Senate and 64 members in the House.
- Fifty-second Legislature, Regular Session convened January 12, 1993; Budget Session convened February 21, 1994. Included 30 members in the Senate and 60 members in the House.
- Fifty-third Legislature, Regular Session convened January 10, 1995; Budget Session convened February 19, 1996. Included 30 members in the Senate and 64 members in the House.
- Fifty-fourth Legislature, Regular Session convened January 14, 1997; Budget Session convened February 9, 1998. Included 30 members in the Senate and 60 members in the House.
- Fifty-fifth Legislature, Regular Session convened January 12, 1999; Budget Session convened February 14, 2000, 30 members in the Senate and 60 members in the House.
- Fifty-sixth Legislature, Regular Session convened January 9, 2001; Budget Session convened February 11, 2002. Included 30 members in the Senate and 60 members in the House.
- Fifty-seventh Legislature, Regular Session convened January 14, 2003; Budget Session convened February 9, 2004. Included 30 members in the Senate and 60 members in the House.

Historical Facts about the Wyoming Legislature

- Fifty-eighth Legislature, Regular Session convened January 11, 2005; Budget Session convened February 13, 2006. Included 30 members in the Senate and 60 members in the House.
- Fifty-ninth Legislature, Regular Session convened January 9, 2007; Budget Session convened February 11, 2008. Included 30 members in the Senate and 60 members in the House.
- Sixtieth Legislature, Regular Session convened January 13, 2009; Budget Session convened February 8, 2010. Included 30 members in the Senate and 60 members in the House.
- Sixty-first Legislature, Regular Session convened January 11, 2011; Budget Session convened February 13, 2012. Included 30 members in the Senate and 60 members in the House.
- Sixty-second Legislature, Regular Session convened January 8, 2013; Budget Session convened February 10, 2014. Included 30 members in the Senate and 60 members in the House.
- Sixty-third Legislature, Regular Session convened January 13, 2015; Budget Session convened February 8, 2016 at the Jonah Business Center located at 3001 E. Pershing Boulevard, due to the Capitol Square Project. Included 30 members in the Senate and 60 members in the House.

Special Sessions Stats

- Twenty-one special sessions have been called since statehood.
- The first special session was held in 1890 and 1891 during the first legislative session.
- Three special sessions have been held in conjunction with regularly scheduled budget sessions to address non-budget issues.
- The Wyoming Constitution was amended in 1971 to allow the Legislature to hold annual sessions, not to exceed 60 legislative working days in a biennium. Before 1973, the Legislature only met in odd-numbered years for a combined general and budget session.
- Wyoming voters amended the Wyoming Constitution in November 2002 to allow the Wyoming Legislature to convene special sessions. Before the passage of the constitutional amendment, only the Governor could call the Legislature into a special session.
- The Legislature invoked its authority to call itself into a special session for the first time in June of 2004. The Wyoming Legislature may convene a special session pursuant to Article 3 Section 7 of the Wyoming Constitution.
- The Legislature may convene special session not to last longer than 20 working days upon written request to the presiding officer of each house by a majority of the elected members of each house.
- Article 3, Section 6 of the Wyoming Constitution specifies that the Legislature cannot meet for more than 60 legislative working days excluding Sundays during the biennium, except when called into special session.
- The section specifies that the Legislature shall meet in odd-number years for a general and budget session and may meet in even-numbers years for a budget session.
- This section also stipulates that the Legislature shall meet for no more than 40 legislative working days excluding Sundays in any one calendar year, except when called into special session.

Historical Facts about the Wyoming Legislature

- This section states that the Legislature will meet at other times when convened by the Governor or upon call of the Legislature.

Special Sessions Dates and Reasons

- November 12, 1890-January 10, 1891: (First State Legislature)
- January 26-January 28, 1920: Creation of irrigation districts; Ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (women's suffrage)
- July 16-July 18, 1923: Farm Loan Act; Interstate Streams
- December 12-17, 1929: Appropriation for penitentiary; Appropriation for Girl's Industrial Institute; Parks for cities and towns; Funds for extension work; Special election for highway bonds; Distribution and payment of gasoline tax; Various election issues; Federal public land natural resources
- December 4-December 23, 1933: State bank compliance with National Banking Act of 1933; Liquor sales regulation; Consideration of report of the Special Legislative Tax Committee; Emergency relief in conjunction with National Recovery Administration; Emergencies in the offices of State Examiner and Attorney General; Changes to motor vehicle laws; Charitable and penal institution reforms
- April 17, 1944: Consideration of legislation to enable Wyoming residents serving in the armed forces to vote at general elections.
- April 15-April 22, 1946: University of Wyoming funding (*associated with the anticipated increased need for housing and instructors to meet the education needs of returning veterans under the G.I. Bill of Rights and to address salary scale issues for instructors*); Funding requests from other state departments.
- June 28-June 30, 1948: University of Wyoming funding; Funding requests from other state departments.
- February 14-February 23, 1950: Control measures for grasshopper infestation
- July 7-July 8, 1971: Ratification of the 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (voting age)
- May 1-May 6, 1978: Special Budget Session: Adoption of a budget (*The Legislature, upon the adjournment of the budget session had not taken final action on the budget bill and failed to adopt a completed budget.*)
- March 2-March 3, 1981: Special Session called after the Legislature adjourned upon the expiration of the 40 legislative working days before legislation was enrolled or signed by the presiding officers of the Senate and House as required by the Wyoming Constitution.
- August 4-August 5, 1983: Unemployment Compensation Program
- June 16-June 19, 1986: Workers' Compensation Program
- May 19-May 22, 1987: Maximum speed limit on interstate highways; Amendment No. 4 Program

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- February 10-March 17, 1992: Combined Special and Budget Session: Reapportionment of legislative districts
- May 11-May 13, 1992: Reconvened Budget Session: Department of Corrections and Department of Health funding request
- May 30-June 6, 1997: Education reform and school finance
- February 9-March 12, 1998: Combined Special and Budget Session: Education reform and school finance
- February 11-March 13, 2002: Combined Special and Budget Session: Reapportionment of legislative districts; Education reform and school finance
- July 12-July 17, 2004: Medical malpractice, malpractice insurance availability

Senate President and Speaker of the House from same County/Town

Source: University of Wyoming

- 1897: Laramie County (President George Abbott and Speaker A.D. Kelley)
- 1903: Albany County (President Charles D. Guernsey and Speaker Jerome S. Atherly)
- 1935: Sheridan County (President N.A. Pearson and Speaker H.D. Watenpaugh)
- 2015-2016: Albany County (President Phil Nicholas and Speaker Kermit Brown)

The Wyoming Legislature Composite Narratives Exhibit

The self-guided tour in Wyoming's State Capitol begins on the north side of the Rotunda on the third floor outside of Room 308. The Legislative Composite Exhibit is arranged with the House of Representatives pieces displayed in the east wing of the Capitol, while the Senate pieces are displayed in the west wing. The individual pieces are displayed in decades and the accompanying narratives are different for the House and Senate collections. The first House and Senate composites after statehood are displayed on the second floor in their respective lobbies along with the current composite for the sitting Legislature.

All of the narratives focus on the issues facing the state during each period and how state policy makers addressed the challenges of their time. You will notice social, cultural, and demographic differences in the display of the decades.

Material for the narratives was derived from the "Wyoming Blue Book" and T.A. Larson's "History of Wyoming." Most of the composites can be seen on the third floor, with the exception of more recent ones located on the second floor, which may be viewed when the Legislature is no in session.

Many of the narratives also include a section at the bottom titled "Did You Notice," which includes fun facts or thought-provoking questions about the time.

Historical Facts about the Wyoming Legislature

Senate Composite Locations in the Wyoming State Capitol (West Wing)

- Territorial Council: 2nd floor, Senate Lobby entrance
- 1893-1909: 3rd floor, Rotunda, north walls
- 1911-1929: 3rd floor, Senate Balcony Lobby
- 1931-1939: 3rd floor, near Rooms 303 & 304, south walls
- 1941-1959: 3rd floor, Senate Balcony, east & south walls
- 1961-1969: 3rd floor, Senate Balcony, east & north walls
- 1971-1980: 3rd floor, north staircase
- 1981-1990: 3rd floor Senate balcony, east wall
- 1991-2000: 2nd floor, near south staircase, back of Chamber
- 2001-2014: 2nd floor, near north staircase, back of Chamber
- Current & first body: 2nd floor, Senate Lobby

House Composite Locations in the Wyoming State Capitol (East Wing)

- 7th-11th Territorial Assembly: 3rd floor, Rotunda
- 1893-1903: 3rd floor, near Room 311, north walls
- 1905-1917: 3rd floor, House Balcony Lobby
- 1919-1929: 3rd floor, near Rooms H8 & 301, south walls
- 1931-1949: 3rd floor, House Balcony, west & north walls
- 1951-1969: 3rd floor, House Balcony, west & south walls
- 1971-1980: 2nd floor, south staircase, back of Chamber
- 1981-2000: 2nd floor, near north staircase, back of Chamber
- 2001-2014: 2nd floor, near south staircase, back of Chamber
- Current & first body: 2nd floor, House Lobby