

Freudenthal discusses state budget

WORLAND – Wyoming Gov. Dave Freudenthal took time out of his busy day which included attending the swearing in of newly-appointed Fifth Judicial District Circuit Court Judge Tom Harrington on Friday to talk about Wyoming's Legislature and what he sees going on now that the country has elected a Democratic president.

Freudenthal says he understands why the House Appropriations Committee is reducing his funding request for highway construction.

Since putting together his budget, there are rumblings about a Federal stimulus package that may include funding for highways, he said.

"Which is a fact I didn't expect when I put my budget together," Freudenthal said. "It puts a hit on our Senate delegation to make sure we get that highway money because we need to keep investing in our highways."

Under the U.S. House version of the stimulus bill, there may be \$190 million in highway money.

The other major cut proposed by the state House Appropriations Committee concerns the Homestead Exemption, he said.

"Those two items together constitute about \$89 million — \$50 million for highways and \$39 million for property tax," he said.

If the federal stimulus package doesn't contain adequate funding money for highways, he said Wyoming will be down \$50 million.

"Trying to figure out what that package looks like is like trying to pick up a piece of mercury right now," he said. "It's just kind of all over."

His recommendation for property tax relief has gotten further this year than it has in the past. Usually it's killed in committee, he said.