

## **Gov: state's finances in "great shape"**

By Tim Monroe

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CASPER – Gov. Dave Freudenthal told the Rotary Club of Casper Monday that he is looking at submitting a general fund budget to the Wyoming Legislature of about \$3.8 billion.

"We expect revenues to be somewhere between \$3.3 billion and \$3.6 billion for the next biennium," Freudenthal said. His budget does not include almost \$1 billion that will fund education in the state from the education foundation money.

He noted that he has to submit his budget request on December 1 but the legislature "gigs me by withholding income projections until the third week of October." He noted that state finances are in great shape. "This [economy] is incredibly healthy," he said. "I looked at some of the agency requests and there are things I wouldn't fund no matter how much money we had."

The Governor expressed the wish that Abandoned Mine Land funds currently held by the U.S. Department of the Interior would be released and a substantial amount would be given to the University of Wyoming to establish a School of Energy. "This school should have been established back in the Herschler days (1975-86)," the Governor noted.

"There is a crisis of the culture of education, not a crisis in funding. The school should educate the children" and parents should raise the children, Freudenthal said. He noted that parents need to attend parent-teacher conferences, concerts, and athletic contests and to be part of their children's school lives.

"I also note that teachers are burning out in the fifth to seventh year because of what they have to deal with," Freudenthal added.

He also said his administration will generate a proposal for local government funding since a special House-Senate committee apparently delayed the issue until next year. "The money [we propose] will have strings; it should go to infrastructure such as streets, curbs and gutters, water and sewer lines," he said. "Our concern is that people are coming to the state but they are working and sending their checks back home; they are not moving here." He noted that the Wyoming Community Development Authority is the leading state agency on housing. "We don't need new agencies; we need more work out of the existing agencies," he said.

With regard to state growth, he said, "It is not clear that this state is committed to growth. Everyone says growth is good but when it comes down to it they put money in the Permanent Mineral Trust Fund so we won't have to pay taxes in the future. We need roads, sewer and water lines, and funding for Business Ready Communities. We're doing it halfway; we need to build a balance because we won't build our economy in the next bust, we have to build it now in the boom."

The Governor took several questions from the audience. The last one asked about grizzlies.

"I can only look forward to the day of the One Shot Grizzly" hunt, Freudenthal quipped in a reference to the famous One Shot Antelope Hunt held recently near Lander.