

WBR ARTICLE

Gov urges 'discipline' to Legislature

By Dennis E. Curran

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CHEYENNE – Gov. Dave Freudenthal kicked off the Wyoming Legislature's Budget Session today, urging lawmakers to practice "discipline" in their spending and to "do what is right" for Wyoming and its people.

"We've done a lot over the last few years, what we need to do is stick to our task and keep building on what we've done" and resist the temptation to build "newer mouse traps," the governor said in his annual "State of the State" speech.

"The greatest discipline we need in Wyoming, when we have the abundance that we have, is the discipline to focus on doing what's right," he said. "What's at stake here is whether or not we're going to do what is right, not what our friends want us to do, but what's right."

Freudenthal noted that Wyoming's gross state product has more than doubled in the last 10 years and state revenues are double what they were as recently as 2003. His nearly \$3.6 billion proposed budget is "generous and abundant," he said, and he commended the Legislature's Joint Appropriation Committee for its actions, saying the committee's recommendation "follows the contours of the state ... and our people ... and the available revenues."

He warned, however, that most agencies and interests didn't get all they wanted and will be seeking more from the Legislature during the 20-day budget session, and he urged legislators to "resist those temptations."

In the past, he said, state leaders needed to reinvest money to make up for past inabilities to do so, but now is the time to build on the progress and program already in place.

"We are at a point where the abundance we enjoy requires discipline," he emphasized.

"We need to have the discipline to recognize that even with this abundance, we cannot and should not fund every request that comes before us."

The governor did recommend more than a dozen initiatives, including using Abandoned Mine Land funding for clean-coal and carbon-capture research. Other recommendations included a pilot health insurance program, tightening of the state's lax business registration and dog-fighting laws, a stronger subdivision law, a severance tax on helium, fairness for local governments and property tax relief for seniors.

In his closing, Freudenthal lamented the current state of politics in the country.

"What I'm arguing for is a different way of doing business, because I think ... people are beginning to wonder about not the decisions we make but the way that we make them," he said.

The governor cited his "Building the Wyoming We Want" conference in Casper as an example how committed Wyoming people are to doing what's right to ensure that Wyoming can remain a wonderful place in the future.

"We owe that to ourselves, we owe that to our children, and we owe that to future generations," he said.