



Western Dakota Energy Association  
Legislative Report #14, April 6, 2019  
[Geoff Simon](#), Executive Director

Friday, Day 61, was the deadline for bills to be reported out of committee in the second house. The photo on the right is the whiteboard in the Roughrider Room where the House Appropriations Committee meets. It's a list of bills awaiting action including the budget bills of more than a dozen state agencies, and other bills that contain spending provisions. All bills that spend state dollars must go through Appropriations in both houses, and those with policy provisions are also heard in one of the various policy committees. Beginning next week, all eyes will be on the 60 or more conference committees appointed to work out policy and spending differences between House and Senate members.

Year	Number
2009	2017
2002	*2018
2003	*2019
2005	*2020
2006	*2014
*2007	2015
2008	2016
	*2021
	2022
	*2023

2211  
2317  
2224  
2265  
2249  
2293  
2297  
2124

Among the spending bills WDEA is watching that advanced this week is [HB 1013](#), the budget of the University and School Lands Department. The Senate Appropriations Committee struck provisions added in the House that would require the investment of the Land Department's permanent funds to be under the supervision of the state investment board. The Senate version of the bill still contains a \$4 million appropriation to support an energy impact grant fund. The same committee also kicked out [HB 1020](#) which provides funding for the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, as well as the NDSU Extension Service and ag research facilities. The bill fully funds UGPTI's request for \$975,000 to update its road and bridge [needs study](#). The amount had been cut to \$450,000 by the House committee. The study, initially funded by the 2015 Legislature, was not funded in the 2017 session, so its data is now nearly three years old. The information contained in the study helps guide local road repair and maintenance decisions. It is also the basis for the distribution of county and township infrastructure dollars provided in [HB 1066](#), the Prairie Dog bill.

House appropriators on an 18-1 vote passed [SB 2265](#), legislation that contains numerous education funding provisions. The bill would move the Foundation Aid formula toward "on-time funding" in the second year of the 2019-21 biennium. Current state aid payments are based on the previous year's school enrollment, which has a negative financial impact on districts with rapidly growing enrollment. The bill would also provide \$3 million for rapid enrollment grants, credited at the rate of \$4,000 per student. It will require all school districts to achieve the desired 60-mill property tax target over time. Numerous western North Dakota districts have lower mill levies because of large increases in property values the past 10 years. The bill also includes language specifically intended to benefit Williston District #1 regarding tuition rates charged to neighboring districts who send students to Williston High School. [SB 2214](#), another key education funding bill, passed the House 91-0 this week. It has been substantially amended from the [original bill](#) which would have used money from the Foundation Aid Stabilization Fund to provide up to \$250 million in low interest school construction loans. In its [current form](#), the bill would transfer \$35 million in cash from the stabilization fund to the school loan fund. It also contains a statement of legislative intent that in the 2021-23 biennium, the state would provide \$110 million from the Foundation Aid Stabilization Fund to DPI for ongoing funding for state school aid, and transfer \$75 million from the stabilization fund to the school construction assistance revolving loan fund.

To no one's surprise there are several other major spending issues yet to be resolved. Near the top is a low-interest infrastructure loan fund for city and county government. The loan pool would have been provided in [SB 2275](#), but the bill was defeated in the House. Its provisions were attached this week to [HB 1014](#), the Industrial Commission budget bill. Also still on the table is Governor Burgum's request for \$50 million in Legacy Fund earnings to fund the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library, and the larger discussion about all Legacy earnings which currently top \$400 million.

There was no action this week on [SB 2344](#), the pore space bill that has divided landowners and oil industry interests. Both the House and Senate appointed three members to a conference committee that will try to work out differences surrounding the definition of land, which landowner groups believe takes away rights to their property. No date has been set for the committee meeting. Click [here](#) to see the conference committee schedule.

A conference committee on [HB 1171](#) will meet Monday morning. The bill would establish a skilled workforce scholarship fund aimed at addressing the shortage of workers in high demand occupations. It would provide \$10 million that would cover the cost of tuition, fees, books, and supplies for up to four semesters to qualified applicants, and requires a dollar-for-dollar private sector match. The recipient would have to work in the state for at least three years after graduation. Testimony during hearings on the bill indicated that surrounding states already offer similar scholarship opportunities.

Additional details about the 2019 legislative session and other energy-related issues affecting western North Dakota can be found in WDEA's [weekly newsletter](#) published every Friday. Click [here](#) to subscribe.