

The AARP Wyoming

NEWS

Wyoming's Future Edition

SNAP Eligibility and FraudWatch Network Information Inside

October 2021

AARP Wyoming Looks 10 Years Into The Future



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STATE DIRECTOR
AARP WYOMING

Things can change in a hurry in 10 years. A look back suggests this time 10 years ago, we were getting ready for President Obama's re-election campaign against Mitt Romney. Apple was getting ready to announce something called the iPhone, and Tim Tebow was quarterbacking the Denver Broncos.

Closer to home, Wyoming's



coal industry was cruising, producing 41% of all the coal mined in the US. That was more than the next seven coal producing states

combined. Dave Christiansen was coaching a 3-9 Wyoming football program that somehow overcame a six-game losing streak to bring

home the Bronze Boot; and a 9% population increase got the state

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KATE SAROSY
AARP WYOMING
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBER

Everyday Issues Highlight Future Concerns

What will the aging population of Wyoming look like and need from AARP in 2030?

By 2030 every Baby Boomer will be age 65 or older which means 1 of every 5 US citizens will be of retirement age. In Wyoming the number is closer to 1 in 4, or almost 25% of the population. According to the Wyoming

Economic Analysis Division, the fastest growing age cohort in Wyoming, the 65+, is projected to grow to 135,600 in 2030 from 104,500 in 2020. This is a nearly 30% increase in individuals who comprise the primary constituency of AARP. Add in the 50 to 64 age group (also AARP constituents) and there will be a lot of us

aging here in Wyoming.

As you can imagine, there is a wealth of data and analysis on this age group conducted by AARP and many other organizations seeking to prepare society for the financial, health care, and other implications of this growth. While I'm aware of the statistics,

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Harshman

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ber of employees, 7000 in the last 12 years. The School side of the budget is a similar size of 1.5 billion per year but schools have nearly 15000 employees and have added 10,000 students over the last 20 years.

Wyoming's Future Challenges.

The Federal Government owns 67% of the minerals mined in Wyoming. Coal, our foundation for 40 years grew steadily up to 450 million tons seven years ago has now been cut in half and shrinking.

Wyoming's big issue is revenue volatility. Wyoming along with Alaska is recognized as having the most volatile state revenue streams in the country. I don't want to focus on the

shortfalls we have had...the cuts we have made, but really on the volatility we have and the efforts we have made to modernize, stabilize and plan for the future. Those efforts include:

- Mineral Royalty statutes have been modernized and have netted \$40m per year;

- Investment Income and process are being modernized. Reduced fees and increased income has netted \$50 million per year;

- Fees, we increased some fees that haven't been looked at since the 70's to pay for services;

- Lodging Tax, was increased netting \$15 million per year;

- We are using our "rainy day savings."

- New revenue streams, gaming, state lands leases etc.

Other Reforms That Could Be Implemented

- Medicaid Expansion would bring millions into our

state and provide medical insurance to 30,000+ residents, mostly working women who currently have no insurance options on the health care exchange or through work. With the wealth of Teton County, our average household income is inflated and thus Wyoming has the lowest federal Medicaid match on Medicaid with both the feds and state paying 50%. In comparison, Montana, Utah, and Idaho receive a federal match of closer to 70% from the federal government..

- If we want to remain a sales tax-only state and provide services that people want and need we will need to modernize our sales tax. Fifty years ago we spent most of our money on goods, not services. Today, that has flipped with most of our money spent on services. Other states have modernized and re-

sponded. We will need to do the same so our state government can continue to provide the services that our citizens want and need.

The Big Question....

Our volatile revenue streams are shrinking, but there seems to be no lack of need for services for the state's citizens. How do we reconcile those two things? The answer I think is continued incremental steps to reform and modernize our current system in order to provide more predictable sources of revenue/services to the people of our precious state?

Thank you for the opportunity. If you want to visit you can call my cell at 262-8075.

Steve Harshman is a teacher/coach at Natrona County High School in Casper, as well as the Co-Chair of the Legislature's Revenue Committee.

Sarosy

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what really impacts me is what I see everyday in my friends and neighbors. In addition, in my role as state volunteer president, I see the human side of all these statistics across the state of Wyoming.

For instance, a number of my neighbors and acquaintances are able to live independently and prosper only because they have an extensive network of support in the community and/or children who live in town or just a few hours away. In my volunteer work for hospice, I've been visiting two women in their late 90s who are still in their own homes. They are in a transitions program (with life-limiting conditions, but not yet terminal) who receive Meals on Wheels, daily visits from a nurse's aide, and an occasional visit from a volunteer. If it were not for these services, those two would have to move out of their homes to live with relatives or in less desirable institutional settings.

This more-and-more common situation makes it clear to me that we in Wyoming need to enable the aging population to remain in their residences as long as possible. In numerous surveys over the years, close to 90% of folks over 65 express a desire to do so. Remaining in one's home, while attractive on one hand, also brings the potential downside of

social isolation. Support for caregivers and an increased number of nurses, home health aides and others in the health care field are needed to support this desire. And opportunities for socializing are also critical such as senior centers and public transportation for shopping.

In addition to a human support system, independence requires financial security. This is true whether staying in one's home or moving to assisted living. Keys to this security are strengthening Social Security and facilitating saving for retirement. The former is politically hard and latter is difficult in Wyoming as many of the smaller employers in the state do not have the wherewithal to do that through the workplace.

The rural nature of Wyoming poses hardships for residents to access health care, especially as people age and need more access to specialists and critical care. Small town populations will decline as residents move to larger towns to be closer to the health care they need. Telehealth capabilities help, but how far will people still need to travel for infusions or to see a specialist. Even with telehealth, one still needs an internet connection along with the right equipment and the skill to use it.

Clearly there are plenty of opportunities to enhance the ability of the 50+ to live their best lives in Wyoming. These are opportunities not only for state and national AARP staff, but even more for volunteers like you and me.



PHOTO/GRAPHIC FROM ISTOCK

Dockstader

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five-camera shoot that includes a producer, two on-air, well prepared broadcasters and full graphics with instant re-play. Nothing compares to SVI Media in Wyoming.

And it all started with a weekly newspaper in Wyoming. It's the future of Media in Wyoming.

Dan Dockstader is Wyoming's Senate President, as well as the morning voice, Executive Producer, and Publisher at SVINews in Afton.