



January 7, 2026

Honorable Tim Salazar  
Honorable John Bear  
Joint Appropriations Committee  
200 West 24th Street, Capitol Building, E201  
Cheyenne, WY 82002

Re: Wyoming Business Council (Letter # 8)

Dear Chairman Salazar, Chairman Bear and members of the Joint Appropriations Committee,

Economic development is essential to the continued growth and prosperity of the citizens of Wyoming. If you have lived for any time in Wyoming, you have witnessed the ebb and flow of communities tied to their economic well-being. Rightly or wrongly, federal and state governments have long been a catalyst for economic development by providing incentives and opportunities for private industry to thrive and invest. Gillette would not be the community it is if it were not for Senator Alan Simpson's efforts to recraft the Clean Air Act to favor Wyoming's low sulfur coal. If this is corporate welfare, it is also competition. These are the primary tools to foster investment in the state's and local communities' economic viability. Every day, Wyoming faces rivalry from other states vying for industries, businesses and opportunities for economic growth. While I appreciate the discussion of whether that is a proper role of the government, in the 49 other states, that horse left the barn long ago. States use a variety of tools from generous incentives, tax breaks, and subsidies designed to bring growth and diversity to their economies. Wyoming voters understood this when they passed Amendment 4 to our Constitution back in the 1980s when the state was broke.

Wyoming learned a lot from those initial steps and created the Wyoming Business Council to bring some discipline and professionalism to the effort. Over the years, Wyoming has endeavored to take a reasoned approach through the Wyoming Business Council (WBC) as the entity that leads and coordinates the economic development services for the State. Their statutory responsibilities encompass a suite of programs designed to promote and enable economic development, business investment, job growth, and capacity for communities to thrive. Local Economic Development Organizations (EDOs) manage local economic development efforts with local and private funds. The WBC provides overall support to local communities and counties and funds various efforts to assist local communities through programs such as Business Ready

Communities. The WBC was always intended to be nimble and adaptive to meet the demands of an evolving business environment.

Like all programs and organizations, there is always room for evaluation and improvement. I had asked the Business Council to seek ways to help communities leverage more than just grant funding. I asked them to look to help provide support to expanding or relocating industries. I asked them to help communities target industries likely to succeed in their parts of the state. I find it fascinating that Wyoming has demonstrated significant leadership across a variety of endeavors and industries. From rekindling our traditional uranium industry, to rare earths, coal, oil, gas, small and large manufacturing, to financial and digital services, Wyoming is punching well above her weight and not leaving tourism or agriculture behind. Wyoming is on an exciting growth arc.

I understand, it may be time for the Business Council to benefit from more careful scrutiny from the legislature in how it goes about the tasks assigned to it. A course correction may be warranted, but a wholesale defunding of the WBC would be counterproductive. Throwing the baby out with the bath water would be short-sighted and significantly diminish Wyoming's ability to compete successfully in President Trump's considered efforts to bring industry back to America.

First, it would send absolutely the wrong message—that *Wyoming opposes economic diversification and growth*—and at the worst time to businesses both within and outside the state. There may be dissatisfaction over funding decisions or whether local EDOs are appropriately involved. However, these are signals to adapt, not to dismantle. Wyoming always sought to get to “yes” with the private sector. Defunding the state economic development agency is a flashing neon sign that Wyoming is “closed”. Doing this when we have a President whose policies are so favorable to Wyoming's prosperity is terrible timing.

Second, a 20 day budget session does not provide the time for a meaningful and thoughtful discussion of how the responsibilities currently handled by the WBC would be transferred or eliminated, and what changes might be needed. Rather than looking to ways to encourage growth that aligns with Wyoming values and tradition, Communities would be left to hope well intentioned industries will look to locate or expand in Wyoming. To leave Wyoming without a state-wide economic development organization with no well thought out, coordinated plan will negatively impact our local communities and economy and put millions of dollars currently deployed and repayable to the state at risk. I remember the hard times of the 1980s. Ranchers went broke, stores closed, economic activity diminished. That is why Wyoming voters passed Amendment 4 to provide funding for economic expansion. I believe to the degree the legislature wants to incapacitate the Business Council, this effort would benefit from being an interim topic

where legislators, business leaders, local economic development organizations, communities, counties, and the Governor's office could put our heads together to determine a more profitable and coordinated approach to the economic development Wyoming needs to survive.

As some of you have noted from my budget recommendations for the WBC, I am willing to discuss options to refocus or redirect agency efforts. However, gutting the agency with a rushed fix is not the answer.

Thank you for your consideration, I look forward to those discussions.

Sincerely,



Mark Gordon  
Governor

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