



214 W 15TH ST
CHEYENNE, WY 82002
WYOMINGBUSINESS.ORG
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

January 20, 2026

Dear Wyoming,

The common ground in Wyoming is our collective desire for vibrant communities and societal health. Both of which are deeply intertwined with economic prosperity. While we cling to the former, we must act boldly and differently on how we approach the latter. We, the members of the Wyoming Business Council (WBC) board and staff, recognize this. It is why we have doggedly challenged traditional approaches to economic development and focused deeply on discovering Wyoming's constraints to economic stability. In short, we know that to achieve a different future, we must do things differently.

It is within that spirit that we offer this perspective in response to the Wyoming Legislature's Joint Appropriations Committee's (JAC) recent actions to defund the state's economic development efforts and the dismantling of the state's primary engine for new economic growth. We embrace the notion of rigorous debate and review of how we approach economic development in Wyoming. We stand ready to collaboratively engage in a process that would lead us all to a better design. But we are adamantly opposed and honestly dismayed at the reckless approach being taken by certain members of the Wyoming Legislature, actions that could cripple our state.

The WBC's purpose is to create an economic landscape that allows communities to grow, businesses to thrive, and families to stay in Wyoming. The current legislative approach is to destroy an entity that is making a positive difference for Wyoming communities and send the programs to other state entities that are not equipped to do this work. That isn't saving the taxpayer, nor will it create a prosperous free market. Instead, it will create government inefficiencies and silos, diluting the impact of the state's economic development efforts. Parcelling these programs out to agencies that are not equipped for economic development will increase administrative costs and bury local projects in new layers of red tape. It replaces a lean, agile team with a fragmented bureaucracy and ultimately hurts Wyoming.

Our state faces real challenges, but they aren't the result of the WBC's work; they are the reason our work is so critical. Since 2008, Wyoming's homegrown, local economy – excluding the volatile swings of oil and gas prices – has grown by 77%. This isn't a ballpark figure; it's the result of targeted work in all 23 counties. This steady growth in manufacturing, technology, and professional services has served as the critical stabilizer for our state. Since 2020 alone, we have helped secure over 1,000 primary jobs and leveraged \$300 million in private investment. While we honor our energy heritage, we must continue building the 'Plan B' that keeps our communities stable when global markets shift. We cannot afford to stop this momentum now.

We have kept homegrown Wyoming entrepreneurs here who would have otherwise built their businesses in Utah or Colorado. One Casper company, DISA Technologies, Inc., applied for a small \$50,000 Kickstart grant just to get off the ground seven years ago. DISA has become an industry leader in mining, bringing enormous venture capital dollars to Wyoming from outside the state, and creating the types of jobs that young people need to stay here.

We've kept Evansville in the business retention game through publicly owned infrastructure. Evansville was able to retain Mesa Solutions, a manufacturer in one of our core industries, in Wyoming instead of letting them go outside the state to expand. We didn't provide a subsidy; we leveled the playing field by providing the basic infrastructure to Evansville – sewer and water – that businesses in every other state already have. This allowed a Wyoming company to compete and win right here at home.

Without the publicly owned sewer infrastructure we are funding, the town of Kemmerer would not be able to host the renewed economic vitality its future holds. Despite the narrative that infrastructure like this would be covered in other ways, we know from our September 2025 board meeting that there was no other program in the state, or at the federal level, that could have provided the sewer upgrades in Kemmerer just to keep toilets operational as their community grows.

The ongoing data center activity in Cheyenne would not be realized without the basic broadband infrastructure, investments in business parks in the form of water and sewer infrastructure, and the collaborative work of the WBC and leaders in Laramie County. These entities have created hundreds of permanent jobs and invested billions (yes, billions) in capital expenditures, workforce training programs, and community philanthropy.

There are many other examples of companies that would not be here if it weren't for the Business Council and its local partners, including Kifaru (Riverton), Weatherby (Sheridan), Microsoft (Cheyenne), HiViz (Laramie), KelTec (Rock Springs), and Amazon (Riverton), just to name a few.

Infrastructure and technical assistance are not the only ways we've helped communities build a vibrant business landscape. The WBC's Challenge Loan program has partnered with local banks to fund loans for business start-up and succession. In just the last three years, we've partnered with 11 banks to unlock potential and keep small businesses Wyoming-owned. These loans help businesses to grow, expand, and continue doing business under new ownership – ensuring jobs and services continue and grow for Wyomingites through established Wyoming businesses. Fourteen of those loans have been Succession Loans, which allowed for the retention of small businesses like Basin Processing, Rocky Mountain Electric, Mountain West Valuations, Cheyenne Tile & Stone, Moore Insulation, Trophy Creative, Front Range Nuclear, ChemSol Inc., Preschool Academy, Rock Springs Block Co., and others.

This board and staff have also worked to develop and change programs to reduce regulations at the local level, increase outside investment, and get out of the way of private businesses. We have also required those utilizing our programs to do more rigorous analysis and training. We are not just writing checks; we are building resilience that will outlast any dollars. For example:

- **The housing crisis is real.** Through our research and strong collaboration with leaders in our Capitol City on housing regulations, building permits in Cheyenne increased 2.6x (160%) in 2025, compared to the previous three-year average. We are now doing the same work with Laramie and Sheridan.
- **Local communities have stepped up like never before.** After we said "no" to an application from the Town of Hudson, we offered them capacity-building support, and they have stepped up to make move after move to increase their town's toughness and ability to withstand economic headwinds.

This board and staff have not waited for a mandate to improve; we have proactively audited our own operations to ensure every dollar works for the taxpayer. Since 2020, we have eliminated six programs that no longer addressed modern barriers to growth and transitioned four others

to different agencies to maximize state efficiency. We have consistently used our rule-making authority to revamp our efforts and have regularly brought data-backed statutory recommendations to the Legislature. Our goal has been to increase community self-reliance and allow our tools to evolve at the speed of Wyoming business. While those legislative changes have not been enacted, we remain ready to partner on reforms that prioritize market results over bureaucracy.

The headwinds our communities and the great state of Wyoming face are real. We are losing young people at a rate that should scare us all. Our communities need investments and support that can create real opportunities for the next generation while also caring for the current one. Our trajectory as a state is simply unacceptable to the business people, parents, and grandparents on this board. We are starting to make progress, but without the outcomes the WBC has produced over the past five years, we wouldn't be making progress; we'd be in even worse shape. A future without this critical work looks very bleak for those who want to call Wyoming home.

Make no mistake, in the coming weeks, members of Wyoming's Legislature will determine the economic fate of our state's future, and as a result, the future of our communities and the people who choose to work and live in them. We invite the Legislature to join us in a transparent, public process to determine the proper role of government in Wyoming's economy. Before we dismantle the tools that have kept our businesses growing and our families whole, let us work together to ensure we aren't leaving the next generation with nothing but an empty landscape.

To that end, the board is directing the Business Council's CEO to work directly with the Board, the Governor's office, and those willing to do so in the Legislature to develop a path forward that ensures Wyoming can drive economic development and prosperity for generations to come.

Respectfully,

Mark Law
Board Co-Chairman
Sheridan

Chuck Brown
Board Member
Wheatland

Randi Downham
Board Member
Laramie

Bruce Pivic
Board Member
Rock Springs

Beth Worthen
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