

Member Profile: Wyoming Senator Mike Von Flatern

Chair, CSG West Energy and Environment Committee

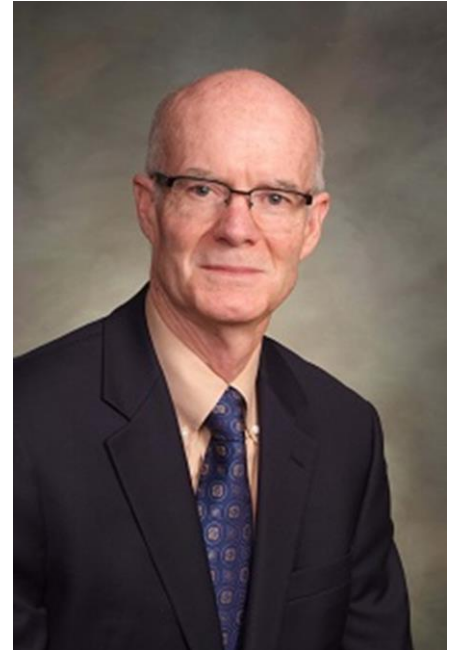
*By Rich Lindsey, CSG West Consultant
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Born in New London Connecticut, Senator Mike Von Flatern eventually made his way to Gillette, Wyoming where he now lives with his wife Margie. The couple has two sons and four grandchildren. Among other local activities, Senator Von Flatern is Vice Chair of the American Red Cross of Wyoming and serves on the Campbell County Airport Board.

Senator Von Flatern is the President of two companies, Innovative Mining and Equipment, LLC and Vons Welding. He also manages a charter air service and is a pilot.

Senator Von Flatern was first elected to the Wyoming Senate in 2005. When asked why he ran for office, he said "I felt I could represent the people of the district I lived in better than what they had been getting." Senator Von Flatern's legislative leadership has included seven years as Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee, and his current position as Chair of the Minerals, Business, and Economic Development Committee. He also serves on the Senate Judiciary Committee and Management Council.

Most of the Senator's out-of-session professional time involves flying airplanes. Senator Von Flatern says that piloting has shaped the way he understands the issues that arise in the legislature. Many of his piloting jobs take place within Wyoming, which has allowed him to get to know people and communities throughout the state. These friendships and experiences have taught him how different communities are in the least populated state in the country, and how important it is to listen to voters when crafting legislation. "If you don't listen to local citizens you run the risk of making



In brief: Senator Mike Von Flatern

- ✓ First elected to Wyoming Senate in 2005.
- ✓ Has chaired the Senate Transportation Committee and the Minerals, Business and Economic Development Committee.
- ✓ President of two companies, is a pilot and manages a charter air service.
- ✓ Member of CSG West Western Legislative Academy Class of 2006.

public policy that doesn't effectively address issues," stated Senator Von Flatern.

Senator Von Flatern's eleven years in the legislature have taught him many lessons. His biggest mistake as a rookie legislator was in being a bit too enthusiastic when stating his point of view. "A rookie especially, but all legislators should learn, as fast as they can, how to be diplomatic in their response to people." Senator Von Flatern's advice for any legislator is simple: make a real effort to try and understand the other side before voting.

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The most significant challenge facing the legislature in the near term, says Senator Von Flatern, is the budget. Lower oil and natural gas prices and decreasing coal

demand will play havoc with state revenues. In the longer term, Senator Von Flatern believes changing the state's tax structure will be an important but necessary challenge for future legislatures.

Senator Von Flatern is especially proud of his role in establishing a Tech Center at Gillette College and in appropriating funds to add passing lanes to Highway 59. This highway runs south from the city of Gillette, and had become an extremely busy and dangerous road due to increasing energy development adjacent to the highway. Passing lanes have gone a long way to making the road safer, says Senator Von Flatern.

As for the most satisfying aspect of Senator Von Flatern's political career, he stated "It's one thing to champion an effort in a legislative session itself and see legislation passed. That is a good feeling. But even better is seeing the positive results from that legislation that were intended by its passage actually happen. That is the best."