

Montana House Conservation Hotlist Week 5: February 1, 2021

Please Support:

HB 99, Revise laws related to utility preapproval, Rep. Hayman (D-Bozeman), House Energy, Hearing 2/3/, Support. Endorsed by the Energy and Telecommunications Interim Committee, this bill would eliminate utility pre-approval. Unlike most utilities, NorthWestern can ask the Montana Public Service Commission to approve the purchase of an electricity generating resource (such as did with the hydroelectric system or gas plants) and pass all of the costs and risks on to customers instead of allowing its shareholders to bear the initial risk. This creates a disincentive for the utility to do its due diligence on whether a generating resource is a sound investment. Instead, the utility can shift the burden to the PSC who has a short review timeframe and insufficient resources leaving customers to bear the risk of a potentially uneconomic investment. *Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org, Nplains*

HB 182 - Revising laws related to utility deadband mechanisms, Rep. Laurie Bishop (D-Livingston), House Energy, Executive Action, Support. HB 182 would change the amount of money NorthWestern Energy could collect from customers when it fails to accurately project its expenses. The bill would amend a grossly unfair law that allows NorthWestern to collect 90% of the costs above its projected costs from customers and only requires the company's shareholders to pay 10%, thus eliminating the impetus for the utility to make accurate projections. HB 182 would allow the Public Service Commission to determine how much an electric utility must absorb for cost overruns instead of passing those costs onto customers. *Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org*

Please Oppose:

HB 170 - Revise laws to include renewable hydrogen, Rep. Tom Welch (R-Dillon), House Taxation, Executive Action, Oppose. HB 170 would dramatically lower the tax rate for any facility that uses "green hydrogen." Green hydrogen means that the hydrogen was formed using renewable energy technology. However, HB 170 gives the extremely low property tax rate of 1.5% of market value to any gas-fired power plant that uses as little as 8% hydrogen meaning that a plant that burns 92% gas would qualify for the 1.5% tax rate. *Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org*

HB 224 - Allow for the snaring of wolves in Montana by licensed trappers, Rep. Paul Fielder (R-Thompson Falls), House Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Hearing 2/02, Oppose. This bill would require that Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks allow the use of snares for wolf trapping. It would cause problems with unintended catch of native wildlife species, be problematic for hound hunters pursuing mountain lions, and is unnecessary micro-management of Montana FWP. *Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, at 458-0227 or ngevock@mtwf.org*

HB 245 - Revising electricity supply resource procurement approval, Rep. Larry Brewster (R-Billings), House Energy, Hearing 2/03, Oppose. HB 245 is an anti-consumer bill that would make it easier for NorthWestern Energy to overcharge customers. The bill increases the burden on the Public Service Commission when it decides whether NorthWestern Energy can charge customers for expensive electricity generating resources such as pricey new gas plants (or five). The bill shortens the timeframe for the PSC to make that decision. These fundamental shifts put consumers in the crosshairs of higher electricity rates in order to benefit NorthWestern's shareholders. *Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org or Makenna Sellers, NPRC, at 406-850-4491 or makenna@northernplains.org.*

HB 273 - Eliminate restrictions on nuclear facility development, Rep. Derek Skees (R-Kalispell), House Energy, Hearing not yet scheduled, Oppose. HB 273 will repeal laws pertaining to the Major Facility Siting Act. Under the Act, voters have to approve or reject a proposed nuclear facility and HB 273 will repeal that language. Repealing this language severely weakens the public's say in whether or not Montana pursues nuclear energy, and, instead, forces Montanans to deal with the repercussions whether they want the nuclear facility or not. *Contact Conor Ploeger, MEIC, at 443-2520 or cploeger@meic.org.*

The Weekly Hotlist is published as an educational service to lawmakers and citizens by the Conservation Working Group, composed of the organizations listed below. Contact Jake Brown, Montana Conservation Voters at 406-855-7821

** Clark Fork Coalition * Environment Montana * Montana Audubon * Montana Conservation Voters * Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC) * Montana Public Interest Research Group (MontPIRG) * Montana Wilderness Association * Montana Wildlife Federation * Northern Plains Resource Council * Montana Smart Growth Coalition **