

Montana Senate Conservation Hotlist Week 5: February 1, 2021

Please Support:

SB 59, Revise laws related to integrated least-cost resource planning, Senator McNally (D-Billings) Senate Energy, 3rd Reading, Support. SB 59 would allow utilities to submit Resource Procurement Plans every two or three years instead of the current legal requirement to do so every three years. This bill helps Montana Dakota Utilities coordinate its resource planning with the requirements of other states. *Contact Conor Ploeger, MEIC, at 443-2520 or cploeger@meic.org.*

SB 94, Establishing Indigenous People's Day, Senator Webber (D-Browning) Senate State Administration, Hearing Postponed Support. This bill would create an Indigenous People's Day on the second Monday of October, currently known only as Columbus Day.

SB 147 - Establish commercial property assessed capital enhancements program, Senator McNally (D-Billings), Senate Energy, Hearing 2/02, Support. Montana businesses often face high utility bills due to old or inefficient buildings. The upfront cost of upgrades poses a major financial challenge, especially when small businesses' pocketbooks are stretched thin. SB 147 establishes a program to overcome this financing gap by leveraging private dollars for energy efficiency upgrades. The financing is paid back through a line item assessment on the property's annual or biannual property tax. This program is voluntary once enabled and counties opt-in to participate. This bill would boost economic development for main street Montana, and help create an environment where businesses are able to thrive, create good-paying jobs, and increase opportunities for all Montanans. *Contact Makenna Sellers, NPRC, at 406-850-4491 or makenna@northernplains.org.*

HB 21 - Authorize funding for the multifamily coal trust home loan program, Rep. Custer (R-Forsyth), Senate Finance and Claims, Hearing on 02/02/21, Support. HB21 increases the amount of loans administered from the coal tax trust fund for development of low and moderate income housing projects from \$15 to \$30 million and modifies the interest and terms of those loans. These changes will work to facilitate more affordable housing options for Montanans, and will grow the size of the coal trust tax fund via repayment of loans. *Contact Mayre Flowers, MT Smart Growth Coalition, 406-253-0872*

SJ 3 - Provide for a feasibility study of advanced nuclear reactors, Senator Gauthier (R-Helena) Senate Energy, Executive Action, Support. SJ 3 would request an interim legislative committee study the safety, waste stream, community concerns, economic feasibility, and benefits of using advanced nuclear technology at Colstrip. *Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org*

Please Oppose:

SB 84 - Generally revise consumer committee laws, Senator Ankney (R-Colstrip) Senate Energy, Executive Action, Oppose. This bill would make it much more difficult for the Montana Consumer Counsel to protect Montanans from utilities who want to overcharge customers. The Montana Consumer Counsel is the only entity constitutionally charged with protecting consumers from monopoly utilities in proceedings before the PSC. The Consumer Counsel is a very small office that hires experts and consultants to help review utility filings and argue for consumer protections before the PSC. This bill makes it harder for the Consumer Counsel to do so. *Contact Makenna Sellers, NPRC, at 406-850-4491 or makenna@northernplains.org or Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org.*

SB 143 - Generally revise laws re Class B-10 and Class B-11 elk and deer licenses, Senator Ellsworth (R-Hamilton) Senate Fish and Game, Hearing 2/02, Oppose. This bill would create outfitter-sponsored licenses for the majority of non-resident big game hunting licenses. It

House Conservation Hotlist, 03/25/2013

would lead to more leasing of private lands to public hunters, limit opportunity for do-it-yourself hunters and further impede wildlife management. *Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, at 458-0227 or ngevock@mtwf.org*

SB 115 - Establish acquisitions requiring land board consideration, Senator Regier (R-Kalispell) Second Reading, Oppose. This bill would require that conservation easement paid for by hunters under the Habitat Montana program go to the state Land Board for approval. It adds bureaucracy, creates uncertainty for ranch families who want to protect their ranches and provide public access, and will result in far fewer easements extending public access. *Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, at 458-0227 or ngevock@mtwf.org*

SB 161 - Allow certain subdivisions to qualify for an expedited review, Senator Esp (R-Big Timber) Senate Local Government, Hearing 2/03, Oppose. SB 161 would create an expedited subdivision review process that would allow a subdivider to bypass important environmental and public services review processes. It would exempt qualifying subdivisions from preparation of an environmental assessment, and exempts them from the primary review criteria which covers impacts to agriculture, wildlife and wildlife habitat, and local services and facilities making it difficult to mitigate impacts regardless of the number of lots contained in the proposed subdivision. *Contact Mayre Flowers, MT Smart Growth Coalition, 406-253-0872 or Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org.*

SB 164 - Revise non-degradation standards for nitrates, Senator Glimm (R-Kila) Senate Natural Resources, Hearing 2/03, Oppose. This bill would increase the standards for allowable pollution of nitrates to 10 milligrams per liter. Nitrates are commonly associated with sewage. This is the maximum pollution allowed under the Clean Water Act, and will likely lead to violations of narrative water quality standards for fishable, swimmable, and drinkable rivers and streams. *Contact Derf Johnson, MEIC, at 406-581-4634 or djohnson@meic.org.*

SB 165 - Generally revise laws related to the department of environmental quality, Senator Glimm (R-Kila) Senate Local Government, Hearing 2/03, Oppose. This bill would eliminate sanitation review for subdivisions of land that are greater than 500 feet from surface waters and exempt minor subdivisions of land from having to conduct a storm drainage review. It also appears to exempt expansions of systems designed for wastewater disposal, storm water, and solid waste disposal from review. *Contact Derf Johnson, MEIC, at 406-581-4634 or djohnson@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 **