

Montana Senate Conservation Hotlist Week 7: February 15, 2021

Please Support:

SB 147 - Establish commercial property assessed capital enhancements program, Senator Mary McNally (D-Billings), Second Reading, 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.*

SJ 3 - Provide for a feasibility study of advanced nuclear reactors, Senator Terry Gauthier (R-Helena) Second Reading, 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*

SR 61 - Confirm Governor's appointees to the Fish and Wildlife Commission, Senator Steve Hinebauch (R-Wilbaux), Senate Fish and Game, Hearing 2/16, Support. Andrew McKean is a public hunter and angler, and understands the public trust of wildlife while working with everyone to strike a balance. He would be an excellent commissioner. *Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, at 533-9432 or ngevock@mtwf.org*

SB 197 - Revise community renewable energy project requirements, Senator Janet Ellis (D-Helena) Senate Energy, Hearing 02/16, Support. SB 197 would make it easier for developers to build small-scale community renewable energy projects and sell the electricity to NorthWestern Energy. The bill eliminates the requirement that developers of these small projects must live in Montana, something NorthWestern has used to avoid purchasing electricity from these community-based projects. *Contact Conor Ploeger, MEIC, at 443-2520 or cploeger@meic.org.*

Please Oppose:

SB 84 - Generally revise consumer committee laws, Senator Duane Ankney (R-Colstrip), Second Reading, 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 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; makenna@northernplains.org*

SB 111 - Revising laws re: conditional hunting permits for disabled persons, Senator Brad Molnar, (R-Laurel) Second Reading, Oppose. This bill would enter crossbows into the archery season for some hunters, despite an existing allowance to modify equipment for some disabled hunters. *Contact Marcus Strange, MWF, at 814-571-0203 or mstrange@mtwf.org.*

SB 143 - Generally revise laws re Class B-10 and Class B-11 elk and deer licenses, Senator Jason Ellsworth (R-Hamilton), Second Reading, Oppose. This bill would create outfitter-sponsored licenses for the majority of non-resident big game hunting licenses. It would lead to more leasing of private lands to public hunters, limit opportunity for do-it-yourself

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hunters and further impede wildlife management. *Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, at 533-9432 or ngevock@mtwf.org*

SB 165 - Generally revise laws related to the department of environmental quality, Senator Carl Glimm (R-Kila) Senate Local Government, Executive Action, 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.*

SB 174 - Revise laws related to local subdivision review, Senator Greg Hertz (R-Polson), Senate Local Government, Hearing 2/15, Oppose. SB174 unnecessarily limits the long-established ability of local governments to place conditions on subdivisions to mitigate their impacts. The bill's retroactively to already approved subdivisions and its subjective criteria puts local governments at heightened risk for lawsuits. *Contact Mayre Flowers, Montana Smart Growth Coalition, at mayre@flatheadcitizens.org*

SB 201 - Revise avoided cost rate-making, Senator Steve Fitzpatrick (R-Great Falls), Senate Energy, Hearing 02/16, Oppose. SB 201 would make it easier for NorthWestern Energy to avoid having to purchase renewable electricity from solar, storage, and wind energy developers. Under current law, when considering most renewable energy projects, the MT Public Service Commission must consider costs that would be avoided by relying on renewable energy. This bill tries to prohibit considerations of these costs; thus, ignoring important benefits of clean energy. *Contact Conor Ploeger, MEIC, at 443-2520 or cploeger@meic.org.*

SB 211 - Revise local subdivision review criteria regarding agriculture, Senator Steve Fitzpatrick (R-Great Falls), Senate Local Government, Hearing 02/17, Oppose. SB211 without justification, excludes from subdivision review considerations of the effects of loss of agricultural soils. *Contact Mayre Flowers, Montana Smart Growth Coalition, at mayre@flatheadcitizens.org*

SB 231 - Revise exempt well laws related to family transfer parcels, Senator Mark Blasdel (R-Kalispell), Senate Local Government, Hearing 02/15, Oppose. As currently written, this bill would allow anyone using the family transfer exemption in the subdivision and platting act to also be guaranteed an exemption from obtaining a water right for a well that pumps up to 35 gallons per minute. This would eliminate any checks on the location of the new well and whether it will have any influence on neighboring water wells or sewage. The family transfer exemption is already a big exemption in the subdivision law, and this bill would compound the problem. *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 or Whitner Chase, Montana Conservation Voters at 407-235-8203

** 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 **