

Montana Senate Conservation Hotlist Week 8: February 22, 2021

Please Support:

SB 197 - Revise community renewable energy project requirements, Senator Janet Ellis (D-Helena) Senate Energy, Executive Action, 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 projects. *Contact Conor Ploeger, MEIC, at 443-2520 or cploeger@meic.org.*

SB 256 - Revise hunter harassment laws, Senator Pat Flowers (D-Bozeman) Senate Judiciary, Hearing 2/24, Support. This bill would make it criminal hunter harassment to gate public roads that lead to public land. *Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, at 533-9432, ngevock@mtwf.org*

SB 264 - Revising integrated least cost resource planning laws, Senator Mary McNally (D-Billings) Senate Energy and Telecommunications, Hearing 2/23, Support. SB 264 would ensure that regulated electric utilities are conducting competitive bid processes that result in least-cost resources for customers and guarantee fair competition whenever an electric utility wants to acquire more generation resources. This measure would be a commonsense practice for the affordability and reliability of energy in Montana. *Contact Makenna Sellers, NPRC, at 406-850-4491 or makenna@northernplains.org.*

Please Oppose:

SB 143 - Generally revise laws re Class B-10 and Class B-11 elk and deer licenses, Senator Jason Ellsworth (R-Hamilton), Senate Finance and Claims, 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 hunters and further impede wildlife management. *Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, at 533-9432 or ngevock@mtwf.org*

SB 174 - Revise laws related to local subdivision review, Senator Greg Hertz (R-Polson), Second Reading, 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 176 - Generally revise laws related to coal, coal tax, and coal-fired unit remediation, Senator Brad Molnar (R-Laurel), Second Reading, Oppose. The bill will be voted on the Senate Floor this week. Oppose. SB 176 is a hodgepodge of Colstrip related issues that makes the future of the plant even more complicated and weakens bonding requirements for plant cleanup. It forces everyone getting coal trust money to sign a pledge to coal, likely violating free speech. It overrides the ownership contract that allows the owners to make joint decisions regarding financial investments at the plant, instead forcing the owners to invest even if they are no longer using the plant or find it uneconomic. SB176 *Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org*

SB 201 - Revise avoided cost rate-making, Senator Steve Fitzpatrick (R-Great Falls), Second Reading, 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.*

Senate Conservation Hotlist, 02/22/2021

SB 211 - Revise local subdivision review criteria regarding agriculture, Senator Steve Fitzpatrick (R-Great Falls), Senate Natural Resources, Hearing 2/24, 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 284 - Generally revise county gravel pit permitting, Senator Russ Tempel (R-Chester), Senate Natural Resources, Hearing 2/24, Oppose. This bill would remove the requirement for mitigation through the state sage-grouse conservation program for gravel pits permitted by a county. Though the creation of gravel pits can have a number of long-term habitat impacts, this exemption chips away at a strong state conservation program that requires the participation of all stakeholders. *Contact Amy Seaman, Montana Audubon, at 406-210-9449 or aseaman@mtaudubon.org*

SB 267 - Authorize reimbursement for wolf trapping and hunting, Senator Bob Brown (R-Thompson Falls), Senate Fish and Game, Hearing 2/25, Oppose. This bill allows wolf hunters and trappers to be reimbursed for costs incurred while hunting and trapping wolves. It allows the reimbursement of receipts for the costs and amounts to a bounty on wolves. No other wildlife harvest community expects or requests such fringe benefits. *Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, at 533-9432, ngevock@mtwf.org;*

SB 314 - Revise laws related to wolf harvest, Senator Bob Brown (R-Thompson Falls), Senate Fish and Game, Hearing 2/25, Oppose. SB 314 would take extreme measures including baiting, night hunting and no bag limits in an extreme attempt to drive wolf numbers down to a bare minimum number. It's unneeded when we have a sound wolf season and already have the tools with the Fish and Wildlife Commission to manage the population. *Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, at 533-9432, ngevock@mtwf.org*

SB 306 - Revise structure of fish and game commission, Senator Mike Lang (R-Malta), Senate Fish and Game, Hearing 2/25, Oppose. would require that four of the seven Fish and Wildlife Commissioners are landowners engaged in agricultural production. This bill makes it clear that sportsmen and sportswomen's concerns will be shut out in key decisions on wildlife management. *Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, at 533-9432, ngevock@mtwf.org*

SB 260 - Generally revise related to property interests and transfer of businesses, Senator Steve Fitzpatrick (R-Great Falls), Senate Business and Labor, Hearing 2/23, Oppose. SB 260 would require the state to compensate landowners whenever a regulation diminishes the value of private property by 25% regardless of the need for the regulation for public health, welfare or safety reasons. *Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org*

SB 265 - Revising electrical generation arbitration laws, Senator Steve Fitzpatrick (R-Great Falls), Senate Business and Labor, Hearing 2/23, Oppose. SB 265 would direct the legislature to override the original contract between the Colstrip owners and force them to conduct any arbitration regarding conflicts over operations at the Colstrip power plant in Montana courts instead of in Spokane courts even though none of the owners have their corporate headquarters in Montana. *Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org*

SB 266 - Revise unfair trade to include certain actions related to electric generation, Senator Steve Fitzpatrick (R-Great Falls), Senate Business and Labor, Hearing 2/23, Oppose. SB 266 would force the owners of Colstrip to keep the plant open regardless of the expense. SB 266 likely violates state and federal constitutional law by allowing the legislature to override the original contract between the Colstrip owners. *Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org*

Senate Conservation Hotlist, 02/22/2021

SB 237 - Revise community renewable energy project requirements, Senator Doug Kary (R-Billings), Senate Energy, Executive Action, Oppose. SB 237 would eliminate the penalty imposed on NorthWestern Energy's shareholders to pay a \$2.5 million penalty to state and tribal low-income energy assistance programs. Montana Dakota Utility has complied with the CREPS requirement in the renewable energy standard law but NWE has not.
Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@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