

Montana Senate Conservation Hotlist Week 6: February 6, 2023

PLEASE SUPPORT:

SJ 9- Joint resolution establishing soil health week and day, Sen. Bruce Gillespie (R- Ethridge), Referred to Senate Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Committee, Support. This resolution designates the first week in April as Montana Soil Health Week, and the first Wednesday in April as Montana Soil Health Day. The resolution encourages agencies, organizations, and individuals to observe the week and day. For more information contact Caroline Canarios, Northern Plains Resource Council, 406-248-1154 or caroline@northernplains.org.

SB 141- Create Indigenous People's Day,- Sen. Shane Morigeau (D-Missoula), Hearing scheduled in Senate Education and Cultural Resources Committee for 2.8, Support. This bill recognizes the second Monday in October as Indigenous Peoples' day to honor the resilience, sovereignty, and contributions of the Native Americans of Montana and the United States. This has been a recognized national holiday via proclamation for at least two years. For more information contact Jocelyn Leroux, MCV, 406-794-0016 or jocelyn@mtvoters.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.

For questions, please contact Molly Bell with MCV at 406-698-9440 or Jocelyn Leroux with MCV at 406-794-0016

Clark Fork Coalition * Montana Audubon * Montana Conservation Voters * Montana Environmental Information Center
Montana Renewable Energy Association * Northern Plains Resource Council

Montana Senate Conservation Hotlist Week 6: February 6, 2023

PLEASE OPPOSE:

HB 85- Expand MEPA Categorical Exclusions, Rep. Marty Malone (R-Pray), Passed House 93 to 5, transmitted to Senate on 1.17. Hearing held in Senate Agricultural, Livestock and Irrigation Committee on 1.26, Oppose.

Exempts from the Montana Environmental Policy Act any leases on state land for commercial development, grazing, or agriculture, that involve the repair, maintenance or replacement of infrastructure. The bill does not say whether the replacement of infrastructure needs to be of a similar size, scale, and impact; what constitutes “de minimis” for water development projects; or outline restrictions on herbicide applications to protect water, pollinators, and wildlife. The primary objection though is its application to commercial development, which appears to be an inadvertent exemption in the bill. For more information contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org.

HB 170- Repeal state energy policy, Rep. Steve Gunderson (R-Libby) Passed House 67 to 32 and transmitted to Senate on 1.24. Hearing held in Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee on 1.31, Oppose. HB 170 would repeal Montana's State Energy Policy. Montana needs an energy policy for our state and its agencies which promotes energy efficiency, conservation, production, and consumption of energy sources that represent the least social, environmental and economic costs and the greatest long-term benefits to Montana citizens. It simply makes no sense to repeal this sound principle which has stood for 30 years, especially now in the face of the increasing impacts of climate change that Montana is experiencing. For more information contact Derf Johnson, MEIC, (406) 581-4634 or djohnson@meic.org.

SB 200- Revise use of party affiliation for nonpartisan races, Sen. Greg Hertz (R-Polson), Hearing Scheduled in Senate State Administration Committee for 2.6, Oppose. This bill would allow candidates for nonpartisan races to declare a partisan affiliation and to have that appear on the ballot, including judicial candidates. Creating partisan offices in judicial races is an attack on the American concept of the independent judiciary. Judges should be elected based on their qualifications- not based on their party affiliation. Citizens need to have the assurance that a judge will be impartial in all cases before the court. For more information contact Molly Bell, MCV, 406-698-9440 or molly@mtvoters.org.

SB 208- Prohibit local governments from banning or limiting energy choices, Sen. Jason Small (R-Busby), Hearing held in Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee on 1.31, Oppose. SB 208 prevents the Department of Labor and Industry, which writes the state building code, from including any language that prohibits or limits the use of any energy resources. Additionally, this bill denies local governments any power to “prohibit or impede the connection” of any fossil fuel infrastructure in their jurisdictions. This precludes cities and counties from taking meaningful action on greenhouse gas emissions through stretch codes or regulations. Methane gas is harmful to health, the environment, and the climate. Recent studies show that indoor emissions from gas appliances can contribute to childhood asthma. Local governments should be allowed to mitigate those impacts to address the concerns of their constituents. Energy decisions in a community should be made by the people closest to the issues, not legislators. For more information contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org or Ian Lund, MEIC, 406-333-1858 or ilund@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.

For questions, please contact Molly Bell with MCV at 406-698-9440 or Jocelyn Leroux with MCV at 406-794-0016

Clark Fork Coalition * Montana Audubon * Montana Conservation Voters * Montana Environmental Information Center
Montana Renewable Energy Association * Northern Plains Resource Council

Montana Senate Conservation Hotlist Week 6: February 6, 2023

SB 228- Prohibit local governments from banning petroleum fuel, Sen. Jason Small (R-Busby), Hearing scheduled in Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee for 2.7, Oppose. SB 228 would prohibit local governments from protecting public health, safety or welfare from any type of petroleum product (e.g. oil or gas). It would force local governments to allow compressor stations, gas stations, pipelines, gas power plants, petroleum refineries, and more, regardless of size or impact, near residential properties, daycares, and schools. Local governments would not even be allowed to mitigate impacts from noise, lighting, or truck traffic. For more information contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546 or ahedges@MEIC.org and Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 901-651-5930 or caroline@northernplains.org.

SB 235- Establish requirements for science instruction in public schools, Sen. Daniel Emrich (R-Great Falls), Hearing scheduled in Senate Education and Cultural Resources for 2.6, Oppose. SB 235 is attempting to define "scientific fact"; to mean an indisputable and repeatable observation of a natural phenomenon, and using that definition the bill seeks to limit what k-12 educators can include in instruction and curriculum to only scientific fact. The bill tries to undermine the concept of scientific theory, by claiming theories are speculative, however in practice, scientific facts are what support and build overarching scientific theories. The bill would mean that the board of public education, the superintendent of public instruction, and local school district trustees would have to ensure that all curriculum, and classroom materials, like textbooks, include only scientific fact. This is a misguided attempt to disqualify entire realms of scientific inquiry by dismissing them as theory. For more information contact Amy Seaman, MT Audubon, 406-210-9449 or aseaman@mtaudubon.org.

SB 240- Exempt certain subdivisions from environmental review, Sen. Jason Small (R-Busby), Hearing scheduled in Senate Natural Resources Committee for 2.8, Oppose. This bill would exempt the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) from having to conduct an environmental review for proposed subdivisions that meet certain criteria, including that they are 14 or fewer lots and located at least 2 miles from "high quality waters." This bill would result in poor environmental decision-making by ignoring potential environmental impacts associated with development, as well as opportunities to mitigate that development. This bill would also likely encourage developers to phase developments in 14-lot increments in order to evade environmental review. For more information contact Derf Johnson, MEIC, (406) 443-5250 x 103 or djohnson@meic.org and Ann Schwend, MEIC, (406) 443-5250 x 106 or aseaman@mtaudubon.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.

For questions, please contact Molly Bell with MCV at 406-698-9440 or Jocelyn Leroux with MCV at 406-794-0016

Clark Fork Coalition * Montana Audubon * Montana Conservation Voters * Montana Environmental Information Center
Montana Renewable Energy Association * Northern Plains Resource Council