

## Montana House Conservation Hotlist Week 17: April 24, 2023

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### PLEASE SUPPORT:

**HJ 34- A Study on the Impacts of Short-Term Rentals (STRs) on Housing, Rep. Sherry Essmann (R-Billings), Awaiting Executive Action in House Local Government, Support.** Montanans are finding it difficult to live in the communities they work in, and many moderately priced properties are being converted to STRs. This bill will identify a mechanism for statewide registration with the Dept of Revenue to track STR usage and revenues; review the impact on local infrastructure, including housing needs and availability for Montana residents, and provide recommendations on best practices to mitigate the impacts on housing stock and infrastructure needs. For more information contact Ann Schwend, MEIC, 406-596-1013/[aschwend@meic.org](mailto:aschwend@meic.org).

**HJ 36, Interim Study on energy impacts of regionalization, Rep. Steve Galloway (R-Great Falls), Hearing Scheduled in House Energy, Technology, and Federal Relations for 4.24, Support.** This resolution requests an interim study to analyze the impacts of regionalization of the electric grid and energy system on Montana. For more information contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546/[ahedges@MEIC.org](mailto:ahedges@MEIC.org).

**HJ 40- Interim Study on cryptocurrency energy impacts, Rep. Dave Fern (D-Whitefish), Bill Introduced 4.21, Support.** This resolution requests an interim study of the energy impacts of cryptocurrency operations in Montana. For more information contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546/[ahedges@MEIC.org](mailto:ahedges@MEIC.org).

**SB 442- Allow marijuana tax revenue to be used for county road maintenance, Sen. Mike Lang, (R-Malta), Passed House Appropriations on 4.21, Support.** This bill directs recreational marijuana tax revenue to conservation programs, veterans, and county roads. It finds a win-win solution by creating a Habitat legacy account to enhance wildlife habitat statewide, funding Habitat Montana, and providing funding for county roads maintenance. The amendments made to Senate Bill 442 now make it the best plan to distribute marijuana revenue in a way that protects and supports our public lands, veterans, rural communities, and traditional Montana values. For more information, contact Jocelyn Leroux, MCV, at 406-426-1180/[jocelyn@mtvoters.org](mailto:jocelyn@mtvoters.org).

**HB 486- Generally revise county road access laws, Rep. Paul Green (R-Hardin), Scheduled for Second Reading with Senate Amendments on 4.24, Support.** This bill would raise the fine for illegal encroachments on county roads. The current fine of \$10 per day is so inconsequential that it has never been levied. The fine would be raised to \$100 per day, helping to discourage illegal county road encroachments. For more information contact Jocelyn Leroux, MCV, at 406-426-1180/ [jocelyn@mtvoters.org](mailto: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 406-426-1180*

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

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### PLEASE OPPOSE:

**HB 241 – Prohibit government from requiring buildings be constructed with solar panels, Rep. Josh Kassmier (R-Fort Benton), Scheduled for second reading with Senate Amendments 4.24, Oppose.** In 2022, the Montana Department of Labor and Industry passed rules which updated Montana’s building codes. Part of the rules allow self-governing cities to adopt “stretch codes,” which are voluntary city codes that go beyond what the state requires. These voluntary stretch codes allow solar-ready building codes that would require new construction in those jurisdictions to design and build homes in such a way that adding solar would be a cheap, convenient, and efficient option for building owners. HB 241 would ban these solar ready stretch codes at a time when we need local governments to help create solutions to the climate crisis. For more information, contact Ian Lund, MEIC, 406-333-1858/ [ilund@meic.org](mailto:ilund@meic.org) and Makenna Sellers, Montana Renewable Energy Association at (406)214-9405/ [makenna@MontanaRenewables.org](mailto:makenna@MontanaRenewables.org).

**SB 557–Revise MEPA relating to litigation, Sen. Mark Noland (R-Big Fork), Scheduled for 3rd reading in House 4.24, Oppose.** Even with Sen. Noland's proposed floor amendment, SB 557 would chill public involvement, eliminate opportunities to hold agencies accountable, and create a pay-to-play approach to engage in the judicial system whenever someone challenges the adequacy of an environmental review document under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). For more information contact Anne Hedges, MEIC at 406-461-9546/ [ahedges@MEIC.org](mailto:ahedges@MEIC.org).

**SB 565- Generally revise primary election and nomination laws, Sen. Greg Hertz (R-Polson), Being reconsidered in House State Administration, Oppose.** This bill increases the number of signatures required by a petition for nomination from 5% of previous general election votes cast for the successful candidate to 5% of total registered voters of the area a candidate is to be elected to serve. This will make it more difficult for third parties to qualify. Both SB 565 and SB 566 further entrench the 2 party system by nearly ensuring minority parties and independent candidates are unable to make it onto the General Election ballot. This means fewer options and fewer opportunities for Montanans to make their voices heard. For more information contact Molly Bell, MCV, 406-698-9440/ [molly@mtvoters.org](mailto:molly@mtvoters.org).

**SB 566- Require top two primary for U.S. Senate, Sen. Greg Hertz (R-Polson), Being reconsidered in House State Administration, Oppose.** This bill changes the rules so that only the top two Senate candidates in the 2024 election advance to the general election. This only applies to the U.S. Senate race and means third parties will most likely not appear on the ballot in November. Majority parties shouldn't be making it easier for their own parties to run unopposed by 3rd party and independent candidates while simultaneously taking away the right of Montanans to vote for their candidate of choice in the General Election. Playing political games and changing the rules of our elections is not what Montanans want their leaders to do in Helena. For more information contact Molly Bell, MCV, 406-698-9440/ [molly@mtvoters.org](mailto:molly@mtvoters.org).

**HB 971-Revise Environmental Policy Act, Rep. Kassmier (R-Fort Benton), Scheduled for 3rd Reading in House on 4.24, Oppose.** This bill was amended on the House floor, but even as amended it would be detrimental. HB 971 would prohibit the MT Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) from considering climate change when it analyzes environmental impacts and accepts public comment on projects under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). MEPA is often referred to as a “look before you leap” law because it requires state agencies to consider – and the public to comment on – the environmental, economic, social and cultural impacts of proposed projects prior to approval of such things as air, water and mining permits. For more information contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546/ [ahedges@MEIC.org](mailto:ahedges@MEIC.org) or Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 901-651-5930/ [caroline@northernplains.org](mailto:caroline@northernplains.org).

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