

Montana House Conservation Hotlist: Week of January 13, 2025

	SUPPORT	OPPOSE
HB 160	✓	
HB 30		X
HB 55		X
HB 57		X
HB 122		X

PLEASE SUPPORT:

HB 160—An act repealing the local government prohibition of the regulation of auxiliary containers, Ed Stafman (D-Bozeman), Hearing, House Local Government, (tentatively) 1/16, 3pm, Support. This bill repeals a law that takes power away from local governments by disallowing them from controlling single-use plastics. Plastics bloat our waste streams and pollute our environment. The existing ban impedes on Montanan's right to a clean and healthful environment. Contact: Ben Catton, MEIC, (307) 920-1843, bcatton@meic.org.

PLEASE OPPOSE:

HB 30—Require the Supreme Court to apply a burden of proof for challenge to constitutionality of legislative act, Rep. Lee Deming (R-Laurel), Hearing, House Judiciary, 1/15, 8am, Oppose. This bill attempts to force the Supreme Court to uphold a state legislative act unless the challenger can demonstrate that the act is unconstitutional “beyond a reasonable doubt”—a very high standard that deviates from the long-standing review process courts apply in deciding whether laws violate constitutional rights and principals. It would undermine the judiciary's role in safeguarding constitutional rights and shift the balance of power too far toward the legislature. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, djohnson@meic.org, or Kearstyn Cook, MCV, 406-426-2422, kearstyn@mtvoters.org.

HB 55—Revising public utility resource planning laws, Rep. Gary Parry (R-Colstrip), Awaiting Action in House Energy, Technology and Federal Relations, Oppose. This bill weakens public participation and oversight in Montana's electric and gas utility 20-year planning by shortening the public comment period, eliminating the requirement for the Public Service Commission to hold public meetings, and would shut out the public from utility advisory committees that guide the development of 20-year utility plans. HB 55 provides for an independent evaluator to oversee utilities' acquisition of new energy resources, which is agreeable, but the language for the independent evaluator is clunky and only applies in extremely limited circumstances. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, nfitzmaurice@meic.org, or Makenna Sellers, MREA, 406-850-4491, makenna@montanarenewables.org.

HB 57—Designate quail as upland game bird species, Rep. Paul Fielder (R-Thompson Falls), Scheduled for Second Reading in the House, 1/13, Oppose. This bill would make two non-native species of quail Upland Game Birds and open the door for them to be farmed and released around the state. FWP has prohibited the “possession, sale, purchase, exchange, or transport of live birds” since California Quail and Gambel's Quail were designated exotic species in 2011. Montana should not encourage the introduction of novel species, especially when no scientific research has been done to assess their impact. Contact: Peter Dudley, MT Audubon, 406-443-3949, peter@mtaudubon.org.

HB 122—Revise right-of-way laws, Rep. Larry Brewster (R-Billings), Awaiting Hearing in House Energy, Technology and Federal Relations, Oppose. This bill expands the use of public rights-of-way for utility lines and facilities (land on either side of public roads) to include broadband wires and natural gas pipelines. Natural gas pipelines are subject to leaks and explosions and should not be located in rights-of-way due to dangers to the public in the event of vehicular collisions impacting the infrastructure or if a pipeline ruptures near a roadway. Right-of-way use is allowed for telegraph, telephone, electric light, and electric power lines. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, nfitzmaurice@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 Kearstyn Cook with MCV at 406-426-2422 or Natalie Wright with MCV at 406-426-2645.

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers * Montana Audubon * Montana Conservation Voters * Montana Environmental Information Center * Montana Renewable Energy Association * MontPIRG * Northern Plains Resource Council * Wild Montana