

## Montana House Conservation Hotlist: Week of February 3, 2025

	SUPPORT	OPPOSE
HB 202	✓	
HB 229	✓	
HB 270	✓	
HB 271	✓	
HB 272	✓	
HB 283	✓	
HJ 8	✓	
HB 176		X
HB 216		X
HB 285		X
HB 291		X
HB 295		X
HB 326		X
HB 375		X

### PLEASE SUPPORT:

**HB 202—Generally revise laws related to unlawful use of aircraft for hunting, Rep. Courtenay Sprunger (R-Kalispell), Passed as Amended in House Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Support.** This bill extends the waiting period to hunt after using an aircraft, and ensures that drones are also covered under the prohibition. The bill protects fair chase by tightening restrictions on the use of aircraft and drones to locate game. Contact: Matt Leow, MT Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, 406-370-3183, [matt@tenaciouscampaigns.com](mailto:matt@tenaciouscampaigns.com).

**HB 229—Generally revise Montana Environmental Policy Act to implement court decision, Rep. Debo Powers (D-Whitefish), Awaiting E.A., House Natural Resources, Support.** This bill would eliminate statutory language in MEPA that was found to be unconstitutional in that it prevented the Montana DEQ from considering climate impacts as part of its MEPA analyses, in violation of our right to a clean and healthful environment. By removing the language, the legislature will make clear that it is DEQ's responsibility and duty to fully consider the climate change impacts of its actions. Contact: Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, [ahedges@meic.org](mailto:ahedges@meic.org), or Natalie Wright, MCV, 406-426-2645, [natalie@mtvoters.org](mailto:natalie@mtvoters.org).

**HB 270—Revise Remedies to MEPA, Rep. Katie Zolnikov (R-Billings), Awaiting E.A., House Natural Resources, Support.** This bill would remove the language in MEPA that the MT Supreme Court found to be unconstitutional because it prevented the state from considering impacts to the climate in environmental analyses. HB 270 also clarifies the remedy provisions of MEPA. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, [djohnson@meic.org](mailto:djohnson@meic.org).

**HB 271—Provide that there is a limited executive privilege to the public records act, Rep. Ed Stafman (D-Bozeman), Passed House State Administration (12-7), Support.** This bill would clarify that the Governor of Montana maintains a very limited executive privilege, related primarily to legal advice. HB 271 would both confirm that the Governor is subject to Montana's right to know laws, and assure that the public has continued access to documents and information generated by the governor's office. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, [djohnson@meic.org](mailto:djohnson@meic.org).

**HB 272—Provide that legislative bill drafting files are public records, Rep. Ed Stafman (D-Bozeman), Passed House State Administration (13-6), Support.** This bill would clarify that Montana legislators have a very limited legislative privilege, and that records generated by legislative services are not privileged information. HB 272 would both confirm that the Montana Legislature is subject to Montana's right to know laws, and assure that the public has continued access to documents and information generated by Legislative Services, such as "junque files," as it has done for the past fifty years. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, [djohnson@meic.org](mailto:djohnson@meic.org).

**HB 283—Revising landowner preference qualifications for elk licenses, Rep. Tyson Running Wolf (D-Browning), Hearing, House Fish, Wildlife and Parks, 2/4, 3pm, Support.** Montana law already allows the Fish and Wildlife Commission to issue elk, mule deer, sheep, moose and goat tags to wildlife conservation organizations to conduct fundraisers to support wildlife management of the species. While these tags for elk, mule deer and goat may be either auctioned or raffled (lottery), current law limits the option for the sheep and moose tags to an auction. HB 283 would add the option of a lottery for the sheep and moose tags, creating more opportunity to generate funding for wildlife management. Contact: Matt Leow, MT Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, 406-370-3183, [matt@tenaciouscampaigns.com](mailto:matt@tenaciouscampaigns.com).

## PLEASE SUPPORT:

**HJ 8—Requesting an interim study of electric vehicle fees and taxation, Rep. Becky Edwards (D-Bozeman), Awaiting E.A., House Transportation, Support.** This study resolution would establish a subcommittee in the legislative interim composed of both legislators and stakeholders to examine the fairness of current vehicle fee and taxation methods for both electric and internal combustion engine light passenger vehicles. HJ 8 would examine how the legislature could design a taxation system for high-efficiency light vehicles of all fuel types that is equitable and nondiscriminatory and will adequately address the existing road infrastructure funding deficit over time. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, [nfitzmaurice@meic.org](mailto:nfitzmaurice@meic.org), or Natalie Wright, MCV, 406-426-2645, [natalie@mtvoters.org](mailto:natalie@mtvoters.org).

## PLEASE OPPOSE:

**HB 176—Require unlimited wolf hunting quota when population is at or above 550 wolves, Rep. Shannon Maness (R-Dillon), Passed as Amended on Second Reading, Oppose.** This bill was amended to allow the commission to set an unlimited statewide quota on wolves while the population estimate remains greater than or equal to 550 wolves, allows for unlimited wolf licenses for individuals, and removes commission authority to set regional quotas until that number is reached. Wolves could be targeted in areas with low populations, likely impacting the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and local wildlife tourism businesses. Contact: Peter Dudley, MT Audubon, 406-443-3949, [peter@mtaudubon.org](mailto:peter@mtaudubon.org).

**HB 216—Allow FW Commission to issue deer and elk hunting licenses to private landowners within the Flathead Indian Reservation, Rep. Tracy Sharp (R-Polson), Awaiting E.A., House Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Oppose.** This bill requires the FWP Commission to adopt rules to issue licenses for deer and elk to non-member private landowners within the Flathead Reservation. The State of Montana does not have authority to issue licenses on tribal land. HB 216 would likely lead to litigation over treaty violations and threaten the long standing cooperative agreements that allow non-members to hunt and fish on CSKT Land today. Contact: Peter Dudley, MT Audubon, 406-443-3949, [peter@mtaudubon.org](mailto:peter@mtaudubon.org), or Matt Leow, MT Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, 406-370-3183, [matt@tenaciouscampaigns.com](mailto:matt@tenaciouscampaigns.com).

**HB 285—Generally Revise Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), Rep. Brandon Ler (R-Savage), Awaiting E.A., House Natural Resources, Oppose.** HB 285 would repeal language that recognizes that MEPA implements the right to a clean and healthful environment pursuant to the Montana Constitution. It would also repeal language that says that MEPA is supposed to prevent harm, removes language requiring consideration of long-term productivity of the land and consideration of long term impacts from projects, and eliminates language that empowers MEPA to help protect against the decline of Montana's environment. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, [djohnson@meic.org](mailto:djohnson@meic.org), or Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, [caroline@northernplains.org](mailto:caroline@northernplains.org).

**HB 291—Revise laws related to air quality standards, Rep. Greg Oblander (R-Billings), Awaiting E.A., House Natural Resources, Oppose.** This bill would prevent the state or local air pollution control boards from adopting any air pollution standard or regulation unless the federal government requires the state to do so or does so first. Current law restricts the state from adopting regulations more stringent than federal unless it is necessary to protect public health and the technology is available to do so. HB 291 would prevent the state from regulating greenhouse gases as the federal government currently has no air pollution emission limits on greenhouse gases. Montana's constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment requires the state to protect present and future generations even when the federal government fails to do so. Contact: Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, [ahedges@meic.org](mailto:ahedges@meic.org), or Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, [caroline@northernplains.org](mailto:caroline@northernplains.org).

**HB 295—Revise laws related to judicial transparency and elections, Rep. Paul Fielder (R-Thompson Falls), Awaiting E.A., House Judiciary, Oppose.** This bill would allow for both Montana District Court and Montana Supreme Court judges to identify a party when they are running for a judicial position. If they don't identify a party, candidates must list "undisclosed" on their affiliation. This unnecessary bill would inject an extreme amount of partisanship into our judicial system, which by its very nature should only apply the facts and the law, and not include partisan considerations. HB 295 is an extreme threat to the independent judiciary, the rule of law, and the ability for Montana citizens to pursue justice in our court system. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, [djohnson@meic.org](mailto:djohnson@meic.org), or Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, [caroline@northernplains.org](mailto:caroline@northernplains.org).

**PLEASE OPPOSE:**

**HB 326—Establish a tax on electrical energy not produced by coal to match coal severance tax rate, Rep. Gary Parry (R-Colstrip), Hearing, House Taxation, 2/4, 9am, Oppose.** Extraction of Montana’s coal is subject to a “Coal Severance Tax” on a per-ton basis to account for the consumption of this non-renewable fuel that will no longer be available to future generations and will leave a lasting scar on the land. HB 326 would lower this coal severance tax rate from 15% to 10% of the value of extracted coal while establishing a new “energy severance tax” for all non-coal electricity generation at a rate of 10% of the electricity sale price. Montana’s renewable wind and solar energy resources do not use extracted fuels and therefore should not be unduly penalized by this additional tax. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, [nfitzmaurice@meic.org](mailto:nfitzmaurice@meic.org), or Makenna Sellers, MREA, 406-850-4491, [makenna@montanarenewables.org](mailto:makenna@montanarenewables.org).

**HB 375—Revise statewide ballot issue laws, Rep. Lukas Schubert (R-Kalispell), Awaiting Committee Assignment, Oppose.** This bill requires the secretary of state to conduct a poll of the legislature on statewide initiatives and include the results, broken down by party affiliation, in the voter information pamphlet and on the ballot. Giving too much weight to the legislative poll shifts the focus away from the will of the people and increases partisanship by pressuring voters to follow party lines instead of making independent decisions. Contact: Kearnstyn Cook, MCV, 406-426-2422, [kearnstyn@mtvoters.org](mailto:kearnstyn@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 Kearnstyn 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