

Montana House Conservation Hotlist: Week of February 10, 2025

	SUPPORT	OPPOSE
HB 270	✓	
HB 271	✓	
HB 272	✓	
HB 283	✓	
HJ 8	✓	
HB 216		X
HB 258		X
HB 285		X
HB 291		X
HB 295		X
HB 326		X
HB 375		X
HB 379		X
HB 389		X
HJ 12		X

PLEASE SUPPORT:

HB 270—Revise Remedies to MEPA, Rep. Katie Zolnikov (R-Billings), Passed House Natural Resources (14-0), 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.

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 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.

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 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.

HB 283—Revise laws for hunting licenses lotteries, Rep. Tyson Running Wolf (D-Browning), Passed House Fish, Wildlife and Parks (20-0), Support. Montana law allows the Fish and Wildlife Commission to issue elk, mule deer, sheep, moose and goat tags to conservation organizations in order to conduct fundraisers that ultimately support wildlife management of these species. While tags for elk, mule deer and goat may be either auctioned or raffled (lottery), current law limits sheep and moose tags to an auction. HB 283 adds the option of a lottery for these tags. Contact: Matt Leow, MT Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, 406-370-3183, matt@tenaciouscampaigns.com.

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, or Natalie Wright, MCV, 406-426-2645, natalie@mtvoters.org.

PLEASE OPPOSE:

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, or Matt Leow, MT Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, 406-370-3183, matt@tenaciouscampaigns.com.

HB 258—Requiring the extension of wolf hunting season, Rep. Paul Fielder (R-Thompson Falls), Hearing, House Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 2/11, 3pm, Oppose. This bill requires the commission to extend the wolf hunting season to end in concurrence with spring bear season, typically June 15th. Although HB 258 maintains commission authority to close hunting districts to wolf hunting, this bill would take away management tools from the commission in an attempt to drive down the state’s wolf population. Contact: Peter Dudley, MT Audubon, 406-443-3949, peter@mtaudubon.org.

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PLEASE OPPOSE:

HB 285—Generally Revise Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), Rep. Brandon Ler (R-Savage), Passed 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, or Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, caroline@northernplains.org.

HB 291—Revise laws related to air quality standards, Rep. Greg Oblander (R-Billings), Passed 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, or Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, caroline@northernplains.org.

HB 295—Revise laws related to judicial transparency and elections, Rep. Paul Fielder (R-Thompson Falls), Passed 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 impartial 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, or Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, caroline@northernplains.org.

HB 326—Establish a tax on electrical energy not produced by coal to match coal severance tax rate, Rep. Gary Parry (R-Colstrip), Awaiting E.A., House Taxation, 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, or Makenna Sellers, MREA, 406-850-4491, makenna@montanarenewables.org.

HB 375—Revise statewide ballot issue laws, Rep. Lukas Schubert (R-Kalispell), Hearing, House State Administration, 2/12, 10am, 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: Kearstyn Cook, MCV, 406-426-2422, kearstyn@mtvoters.org.

HB 379—Revising laws related to state land leases for commercial purposes and the sale of state land, Rep. Larry Brewster (R-Billings), Hearing, House State Administration, 2/12, 10 am, Oppose. This bill loosens restrictions on the sale of state school trust land. It removes the current mandatory public auction process, resulting in less public oversight during the sale of public lands. Contact: Kearstyn Cook, MCV, 406-426-2422, kearstyn@mtvoters.org or Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, ahedges@meic.org.

HB 389—Provide for setbacks for wind turbine generators, Rep. Brandon Ler (R-Savage), Hearing, House Energy, Technology, & Federal Relations, 2/10, 3pm, Oppose. This bill would kill Montana wind power generation through untenable setbacks (up to 1.5 miles)—which is 4 to 12 times more restrictive than typical wind regulations. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, nfitzmaurice@meic.org, or Makenna Sellers, MREA, 406-850-4491, makenna@montanarenewables.org.

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PLEASE OPPOSE:

HJ 12—Resolution regarding electric vehicles, Rep. Randyn Gregg (R-White Sulphur Springs), Hearing, House Energy, Technology, & Federal Relations, 2/10, 3pm, Oppose. HJ 12 would thank the US President for taking actions to eliminate EPA vehicle tailpipe pollution standards that are mischaracterized as an “Electric Vehicle mandate,” further mischaracterizing the current state, performance, and suitability of EV technology in Montana. The standards are fleet-wide, meaning that all new car sales—internal combustion engine, hybrid, and fully electric—from a given manufacturer would have to, on average, meet the tailpipe pollution requirement, preserving customers’ vehicle choice. The standards were projected to result in nearly \$100 billion in annual net benefits to society. 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