

Montana Senate Conservation Hotlist: Week of March 3, 2025

	SUPPORT	OPPOSE
HB 136	✓	
HB 146	✓	
SB 266	✓	
SB 408	✓	
SB 427	✓	
SB 460	✓	
SB 477	✓	
SJ 11	✓	
SJ 12	✓	
SJ 19	✓	
HB 176		X
HB 258		X
SB 307		X
SB 368		X
SB 385		X
SJ 14		X

PLEASE SUPPORT:

HB 136—Revise property insurance laws relating to preventative measures to reduce damage, Rep. Steve Fitzpatrick (R-Great Falls), Passed Business, Labor and Economic Affairs (11-0), Support. HB 136 would provide insurance premium reductions to property owners for demonstrable mitigation measures to prevent wildfire or other disaster damages. This bill supports proactive climate resilient policy. Contact: Ben Catton, MEIC, 307-920-1843, bcatton@meic.org.

HB 146—Revising hunting license fees for cranes and swans, Rep. Gary Parry (R-Colstrip), Awaiting E.A., Senate Fish & Game, Support. HB 146 creates a separate license fee for Sandhill Crane and Swans at \$10 for residents and \$75 for non-residents. Funds raised go towards the protection, conservation and enhancement of wetlands in Montana. Contact: Peter Dudley, MT Audubon, 406-443-3949, peter@mtaudubon.org.

SB 266—Allow for triplex and fourplex housing, Sen. Jeremy Trebas (R-Great Falls), Scheduled for Third Reading, 3/3, Support. SB 266 allows the use of triplex and fourplex housing in cities with populations of 5,000 or more, as well as requires that zoning regulations for duplex, triplex, and fourplex housing are not more stringent than for single-family residences. This bill increases infill while addressing housing issues and reduce transportation needs caused by sprawl. Contact: Laura Collins, MEIC, 406-443-2520 ext. 010, lcollins@meic.org.

SB 408—Provide that legislative drafts are public records, Sen. Daniel Zolnikov (R-Billings), Passed Legislative Administration (6-0), Support. SB 408 would clarify that “junque files” associated with legislation are considered public records. Junque files—generated by legislative services—are associated with the drafting of legislation. This bill would confirm that junque files are subject to Montana’s right to know laws and assure that the public has continued access to documents and information generated by Legislative Services. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, djohnson@meic.org.

SB 427—Provide trapping setback distances for certain roads and trails, Sen. Willis Curdy (D-Missoula), Passed Senate Fish and Game (11-1), Support. SB 427 sets in statute the statewide minimum setbacks for trapping near marked trailheads, designated campsites, and recreation sites. The FWP commission reduced setbacks for trapping at these locations in Region 3, and this bill would

reinstate the setbacks that have been in place for years. Contact: Peter Dudley, MT Audubon, 406-443-3949, peter@mtaudubon.org.

SB 460—Generally revise gravel pit laws, Sen. Pat Flowers (D-Belgrade), Hearing, Senate Natural Resources, 3/3, 3pm, Support. This bill reinserts the requirements that DEQ and DNRC consider water resources in the permitting of opencut gravel mines. This requirement was removed in the 2021 legislative session leaving mines with no requirements regarding water resources and property owners with no ability to comment on water quantity or quality issues in the permitting process. Contact: Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, ahedges@meic.org.

SB 477—Revise Subdivision Family Transfer Laws, Sen. Theresa Manzella (R-Hamilton), Hearing, Senate Local Government, 3/3, 3pm, Support. SB 477 improves protections against evasion of subdivision review through family transfer exemption by requiring applicants to sign an affidavit, notify adjacent landowners and impacted water users, and hold a public hearing. If subdivision evasion is determined, the division of land will be subject to requirements for subdivision review. Contact: Laura Collins, MEIC, 406-443-2520 ext. 010, lcollins@meic.org.

SJ 11—Interim study on farmer's markets and food systems, Sen. Bruce Gillespie (R-Ethridge), Passed Senate Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, Support. SJ 11 would create an interim committee to study the impacts of farmer’s markets on Montana’s food systems to identify barriers to their success and opportunities to support them. Contact: Ben Catton, MEIC, 307-920-1843, bcatton@meic.org, or Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, caroline@northernplains.org.

PLEASE SUPPORT:

SJ 12—Interim study on energy transmission, Sen. Gregg Hunter (R-Glasgow), Passed Senate Energy, Technology, & Federal Relations, Support. SJ 12 requests an interim study to examine the impacts on Montana’s citizens and economy from electric transmission line congestion for pathways entering and exiting the state. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, nfitzmaurice@meic.org, or Makenna Sellers, MREA, 406-850-4491, makenna@montanarenewables.org.

SJ 19—Joint resolution to study public transportation, Sen. Andrea Olsen (D-Missoula), Awaiting Hearing, Senate Highways and Transportation, Support. SJ 19 would task a legislative interim committee to study ways to improve public transit services in Montana, including exploring the establishment of a passenger transportation commission. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, nfitzmaurice@meic.org.

PLEASE OPPOSE:

HB 176—Require unlimited wolf hunting quota when population is at or above 550 wolves, Rep. Shannon Maness (R-Dillon), Awaiting E.A., Senate Fish & Game, Oppose. HB 176 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.

HB 258—Requiring the extension of wolf hunting season, Rep. Paul Fielder (R-Thompson Falls), Awaiting Hearing, Senate Fish & Game, Oppose. HB 258 requires the commission to extend the wolf hunting season to end in concurrence with spring bear season, typically June 15. This bill would allow for wolf hunting during denning and whelping season, and could lead to wolves being relisted in the Northern Rockies. Due to increased mortality of pups and changes to pack recruitment, the department anticipates that it will take 3-4 years before it can recalibrate its method for population estimates. Contact: Peter Dudley, MT Audubon, 406-443-3949, peter@mtaudubon.org.

SB 307—Reallocate Montana marijuana tax revenue, Sen. Tom McGillvray (R-Billings), Passed Senate Business, Labor and Economic Affairs, Oppose. SB 307 would strip vital funding from programs like Habitat Montana, state parks, trails, and nongame wildlife conservation (more specifically, an estimated loss of \$21 million for Habitat Montana and \$12.6 million for other critical environmental programs over the next two years). With over \$1 billion proposed for spending increases and tax cuts in the governor’s budget, there is ample funding to support the conservation of our state’s public lands and wildlife. Contact: Kearstyn Cook, MCV, 406-426-2422, kearstyn@mtvoters.org, or Noah Marion, Wild Montana, 406-624-9622, nmarion@wildmontana.org.

SB 368—Allow correction of minor maintenance items at mines, Sen. Sue Vinton (R-Billings), Awaiting E.A., Senate Natural Resources, Oppose. SB 368 inserts a sweeping definition of “minor maintenance item,” which provides too much discretion to DEQ on determining whether an enforcement action is merited. This bill will lead to lax environmental enforcement, as it authorizes the DEQ to categorize certain coal mine permit violations as “minor maintenance items,” and to forego normal compliance requirements. Contact: Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, caroline@northernplains.org or Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, djohnson@meic.org.

SB 385—Create a general claims court, Sen. Tom McGillvray (R-Billings), Passed Senate Judiciary, Oppose. SB 385 would create a special court for the purposes of hearing constitutional challenges to state actions and certain petitions for judicial review of administrative decisions. This bill would inject partisanship into important constitutional decisions by allowing for a governor’s hand-picked judges to decide major cases, rather than the Montana Supreme Court (which is elected by the people). This bill would also cost the state additional funds by having to create an entirely new court. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, djohnson@meic.org.

SJ 14—Resolution to release federal wilderness study areas, Sen. Tony Tezak (R-Ennis), Awaiting Hearing, Senate Energy Technology & Federal Relations, Oppose. SJ 14 calls on Congress to remove protection from every single Wilderness Study Area in Montana. The bill also calls on Congress to strip protection from all the state’s inventoried roadless areas. Contact: Kearstyn Cook, MCV, 406-426-2422, kearstyn@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 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