

## Montana House Conservation Hotlist: Week of March 17, 2025

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	SUPPORT	OPPOSE
HB 372	✓	
HB 477	✓	
HB 649	✓	
HB 762	✓	
HJ 8	✓	
HJ 15	✓	
SB 63	✓	
SB 224	✓	
HB 379		X
HB 424		X
HB 506		X
HJ 12		X
HJ 17		X
SB 21		X
SB 228		X
SB 262		X
SB 436		X

### PLEASE SUPPORT:

**HB 372—Revise license fees used for funding of upland game bird enhancement program (UGBEP), Rep. Tom France (D-Missoula), Passed House Fish, Wildlife & Parks (20-0), Support.** HB 372 would increase funds allocated to the UGBEP, primarily through increasing non-resident game bird and combination license fees. The UGBEP funds critical habitat enhancement projects for wildlife, and promotes collaboration between landowners and FWP. This bill has been amended to address concerns with the fiscal note. Contact: Peter Dudley, MT Audubon, 406-443-3949, [peter@mtaudubon.org](mailto:peter@mtaudubon.org).

**HB 477—Phase out polystyrene single use food containers, Rep. Marilyn Marler (D-Missoula), Passed House Natural Resources (12-2), Support.** HB 477 would phase out the use of styrofoam containers through statewide uniform regulation. Styrofoam poisons our ecosystems and chokes our municipal waste systems. Montana would benefit from HB 477 through increased compostable food container manufacturing, industrial composting businesses, use of agricultural by-products and inputs, and a cleaner waste stream. Contact: Ben Catton, MEIC, 307-920-1843, [bcatton@meic.org](mailto:bcatton@meic.org), or Natalie Wright, MCV, 406-426-2645, [natalie@mtvoters.org](mailto:natalie@mtvoters.org).

**HB 649—Establish a farm to food bank program, Rep. Shelly Fyant (D-Arlee), Passed House Agriculture, Support.** HB 649 would create a farm to food bank program, using grant funding to build reliable markets for local producers to provide fresh produce, dairy, and meat to lower-income households. Successful local food systems are integral to climate solutions by supporting small-scale farming and reducing emissions from transporting food over long distances. Contact: Ben Catton, MEIC, 307-920-1843, [bcatton@meic.org](mailto:bcatton@meic.org), or Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, [caroline@northernplains.org](mailto:caroline@northernplains.org).

**HB 762—Require the department of fish, wildlife, and parks to publish a report on river usage, Rep. Josh Seckinger (D-Bozeman), Passed House Fish, Wildlife & Parks (16-4), Support.** HB 762 is a study bill that requires FWP to publish a report on river usage in several major river systems in Montana. This bill aims to gather comprehensive data to inform policy makers and the public. Contact: Peter Dudley, Montana Audubon, 406-443-3949, [peter@mtaudubon.org](mailto:peter@mtaudubon.org).

**HJ 8—Requesting an interim study of electric vehicle fees and taxation, Rep. Becky Edwards (D-Bozeman), Passed House Transportation, Support.** HJ 8 directs

an interim committee to examine the current vehicle fee and taxation methods for electric and internal combustion engine light passenger vehicles. Findings from this study resolution would be presented next legislature. 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).

**HJ 15—Resolution supporting increased transmission capacity in Montana, Sen. Greg Kmetz (R-Miles City), Passed House Energy, Technology, & Federal Relations, Support.** HJ 15 opens the dialogue with utility stakeholders and government officials on Montana’s critical need to expand electric transmission capacity. The resolution emphasizes that affordable, reliable electricity depends on robust transmission infrastructure. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, [nfitzmaurice@meic.org](mailto:nfitzmaurice@meic.org), Makenna Sellers, MREA, 406-850-4491, [makenna@montanarenewables.org](mailto:makenna@montanarenewables.org).

**SB 63—Revise law related to the use of motion-tracking devices while hunting, Sen. Pat Flowers (D-Bozeman), Hearing, House Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 3/18, Support.** SB 63 extends the prohibition on motion-tracking technology to cover a calendar day, closing a loophole to protect fair chase hunting in Montana. This bill also prohibits a person from relaying motion-tracking information to another person as an aid to hunting. Contact: Matt Leow, MT Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, 406-370-3183, [matt@tenaciouscampaigns.com](mailto:matt@tenaciouscampaigns.com).

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### PLEASE SUPPORT:

**SB 224—Create Indigenous Peoples’ Day**, Sen. Shane Morigeau (D-Missoula), Hearing, House State Administration, 3/18, Support. An act establishing Indigenous Peoples’ Day (the second Monday in October) as a legal holiday in Montana. Contact: Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, [caroline@northernplains.org](mailto:caroline@northernplains.org), Shannon James, MEIC, 406-690-7757, [sjames@meic.org](mailto:sjames@meic.org), or Natalie Wright, MCV, 406-426-2645, [natalie@mtvoters.org](mailto:natalie@mtvoters.org).

### PLEASE OPPOSE:

**HB 379—Revising laws related to state land leases for commercial purposes and the sale of state land**, Rep. Larry Brewster (R-Billings), Passed House State Administration, Oppose. HB 379 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: Kearnstyn Cook, MCV, 406-426-2422, [kearnstyn@mtvoters.org](mailto:kearnstyn@mtvoters.org) or Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, [ahedges@meic.org](mailto:ahedges@meic.org).

**HB 424—Revise taxes for class 17 data center property**, Rep. Katie Zolnikov (R-Billings), Passed House Taxation, Oppose. HB 424 would give an 85% property tax reduction to the Hardin Generating Station, decreasing state and local revenue. It would give the 20 year old coal plant a lower property tax rate than homeowners. HB 424 was amended to encourage the development of new power generation for data centers but the amendment lowers the property tax rate for the Hardin plant from 6% to 0.9%. Contact: Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, [ahedges@meic.org](mailto:ahedges@meic.org).

**HB 506—Constitutional amendment revising selection of supreme court justices**, Rep. Brad Barker (R-Red Lodge), Awaiting E.A., House Judiciary, Oppose. HB 506 would adopt an appointment process for Supreme Court justices whereby the president of the Senate, the speaker of the House, the minority leaders of each chamber, and two current or former attorneys send a list of names to the governor for selection. The selected individual is subject to Senate confirmation. An appointment process would eliminate the ability for Montanans to directly elect their Supreme Court justices and to continue holding them accountable through subsequent elections. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, [djohnson@meic.org](mailto:djohnson@meic.org), or Kearnstyn Cook, MCV, 406-426-2422, [kearnstyn@mtvoters.org](mailto:kearnstyn@mtvoters.org).

**HJ 12—Resolution regarding electric vehicles**, Rep. Randyn Gregg (R-White Sulphur Springs), Passed House Energy, Technology, & Federal Relations, Oppose. HJ 12 would thank the U.S. 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 were projected to result in nearly \$100 billion in annual net benefits to society. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, [nfitzmaurice@meic.org](mailto:nfitzmaurice@meic.org).

**HJ 17—Resolution regarding energy**, Rep. Steve Fitzpatrick (R-Great Falls), Passed House Energy, Technology, & Federal Relations, Oppose. HJ 17 calls on Congress and the President to weaken or eliminate the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Nuclear Regulatory Commission regulations, mining laws, and laws to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and toxic air pollution from Colstrip. It calls on the President to use the Emergencies Power Act, the Defense Production Act, and others to bypass safeguards for protecting the public as well as protections for clean air, clean water and public lands. Contact: Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, [ahedges@meic.org](mailto:ahedges@meic.org).

**SB 21—Allowing legislative and executive leadership to vacate a writ of mandamus**, Sen. Barry Usher (R-Billings), Hearing, House Judiciary, 3/20, Oppose. SB 21 would ostensibly allow for elected officials, such as the governor and legislators, to vacate a writ of mandamus issued by a court that would compel that official to follow the law. This bill likely violates separation of powers principles, and would allow for elected officials to ignore writs of mandamus, which are court orders that are granted when the government has a clear legal duty, but is failing to comply with that duty. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, [djohnson@meic.org](mailto:djohnson@meic.org), or Kearnstyn Cook, MCV, 406-426-2422, [kearnstyn@mtvoters.org](mailto:kearnstyn@mtvoters.org).

**SB 228—Revise laws related to public charging stations for electric vehicles**, Sen. Denley Loge (R-St.Regis), Hearing, House Taxation, 3/18, Oppose. SB 228 further codifies a double tax on electric vehicle drivers in Montana. EV drivers currently pay an additional tax on their annual vehicle registration fees compared to internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles. EV owners also have to pay a \$.03/kwh tax on electricity (fuel) at public charging stations. EV drivers should pay their fair share for road use, but they are currently paying more than ICE vehicle owners. We disagree with the amendment that did away with the 30% reduction in additional EV registration fees by 2028. Contract: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, [nfitzmaurice@meic.org](mailto:nfitzmaurice@meic.org), Makenna Sellers, MREA, 406-850-4491, [makenna@montanarenewables.org](mailto:makenna@montanarenewables.org).

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### PLEASE OPPOSE:

**SB 262—Exempt subdivision, water/sewer plans from environmental review, Sen. Forrest Mandeville (R-Columbus), Hearing, House Local Government, 3/20, Oppose.** SB 262 would exempt DEQ from having to conduct an environmental analysis under the Montana Environmental Policy Act when reviewing water treatment plans for subdivisions. MEPA is necessary for cataloguing and considering the cumulative impacts associated with the impact of subdivisions on water quality. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, [djohnson@meic.org](mailto:djohnson@meic.org).

**SB 436—Generally revise laws relating to exempt wells, Sen. Carl Glimm (R-Kila), Awaiting Hearing, House Natural Resources, Oppose.** SB 436 would allow for the continued use of the exempt well loophole based upon a lot size calculation up to current limits. Although smaller lots would be entitled to less water, SB 436 maintains free reign to drill wells without permits and could potentially see further amendments as it progresses. Contact: Laura Collins, MEIC, (406) 443-2520, [lcollins@meic.org](mailto:lcollins@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