

Montana House Conservation Hotlist: Week of March 24, 2025

	SUPPORT	OPPOSE
HB 372	✓	
HB 477	✓	
HB 762	✓	
HB 848	✓	
HJ 8	✓	
SB 63	✓	
SB 188	✓	
SB 224	✓	
HB 379		X
HB 424		X
HB 506		X
HJ 12		X
HJ 24		X
SB 21		X
SB 42		X
SB 221		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), Hearing, House Appropriations, 3/24, 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.

HB 477—Phase out polystyrene single use food containers, Rep. Marilyn Marler (D-Missoula), Passed Second Reading as Amended, 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, or Natalie Wright, MCV, 406-426-2645, natalie@mtvoters.org.

HB 762—Require the department of fish, wildlife, and parks to publish a report on river usage, Rep. Josh Seckinger (D-Bozeman), Awaiting E.A., House Appropriations, 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.

HB 848—Provide funding for regional rail authorities, Rep. Denise Baum (D-Billings), Hearing, House Transportation, 3/26, Support. HB 848 would establish a big sky rail revenue account for the purpose of funding the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA). BSPRA seeks to lead the expansion and enhancement of passenger rail service throughout Montana, particularly through the reestablishment of passenger rail service across southern Montana. This would be a major improvement to efficient and accessible transportation in the state. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, nfitzmaurice@meic.org.

HJ 8—Requesting an interim study of electric vehicle fees and taxation, Rep. Becky Edwards (D-Bozeman), Scheduled for Second Reading, 3/24, 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.

SB 63—Revise law related to the use of motion-tracking devices while hunting, Sen. Pat Flowers (D-Bozeman), Awaiting E.A., House Fish, Wildlife & Parks,

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.

SB 188—Revising solar energy policy laws, Sen. Chris Pope (D-Bozeman), Hearing, House Energy, 3/24, Support. The Montana Solar Shares Act enables households and businesses to use shares in an electric generating solar system. Participating customers could individually purchase shares of the larger solar array, and each month receive a credit on their power bill equal to the shares of the energy generated. Contact: Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, caroline@northernplains.org, or Makenna Sellers, MREA, 406-850-4491, makenna@montanarenewables.org.

SB 224—Create Indigenous Peoples' Day, Sen. Shane Morigeau (D-Missoula), Passed House State Administration (18-1), Support. SB 224 establishes Indigenous Peoples' Day (the second Monday in October) as a legal holiday in Montana. Contact: Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, caroline@northernplains.org, Shannon James, MEIC, 406-690-7757, sjames@meic.org, or Natalie Wright, MCV, 406-426-2645, natalie@mtvoters.org.

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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), Scheduled for Third Reading, 3/24, 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: Kearstyn Cook, MCV, 406-426-2422, kearstyn@mtvoters.org, or Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, ahedges@meic.org.

HB 424—Revise taxes for class 17 data center property, Rep. Katie Zolnikov (R-Billings), Scheduled for Second Reading, 3/24, 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.

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, or Kearstyn Cook, MCV, 406-426-2422, kearstyn@mtvoters.org.

HJ 12—Resolution regarding electric vehicles, Rep. Randyn Gregg (R-White Sulphur Springs), Scheduled for Second Reading, 3/24, Oppose. HJ 12 thanks 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.

HJ 24—Joint house resolution supporting Utah in their land lawsuit against the United States, Rep. Tom Millet (R-Marion), Hearing, House Energy, 3/24, Oppose. HJ 24 actively supports Utah’s lawsuit to seize control of over 18.5 million acres of Bureau of Land Management land. If the Utah lawsuit is refiled and successful, it would set a dangerous precedent, impacting over 8 million acres of public lands in Montana. Contact: Kearstyn Cook, MCV, 406-426-2422, kearstyn@mtvoters.org.

SB 21—Allowing legislative and executive leadership to vacate a writ of mandamus, Sen. Barry Usher (R-Billings), Awaiting E.A., House Judiciary, Oppose. SB 21 would ostensibly allow for elected officials to vacate a writ of mandamus issued by a court that would compel that official to follow the law. This bill violates separation of powers principles, and would allow for elected officials to ignore these court orders that are granted when the government has a clear legal duty, but is failing to comply. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, djohnson@meic.org.

SB 42—Provide for the partisan election of judges and justices, Sen. Daniel Emrich (R-Great Falls), Hearing, House Judiciary, 3/26, Oppose. SB 42 would force Montana judges and justices to identify a party when they run for a judicial position. This bill would inject an extreme amount of partisanship into our judicial system, which should only apply the facts and the law, and not include partisan considerations. This bill is a significant 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 Kearstyn Cook, MCV, 406-426-2422, kearstyn@mtvoters.org.

SB 221—Generally Revise the Montana Environmental Policy Act, Sen. Wylie Galt (R-Martinsdale), Awaiting E.A., House Natural Resources, Oppose. SB 221 would dramatically limit environmental reviews under MEPA by narrowly defining what is considered a fossil fuel activity that requires greenhouse gas emissions analysis. This bill prohibits consideration of downstream impacts from any fossil fuel operations, meaning that the burning of coal or oil and gas and the transport of fossil fuels via pipeline, truck or rail would not require consideration of greenhouse gas emissions. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, djohnson@meic.org, Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, caroline@northernplains.org, or Natalie Wright, MCV, 406-426-2645, natalie@mtvoters.org.

SB 228—Revise laws related to public charging stations for electric vehicles, Sen. Denley Loge (R-St.Regis), Passed House Taxation, 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 at public charging stations. EV drivers should pay their fair share for road use, but they are currently paying more than ICE vehicle owners. An amendment eliminating the 30% reduction in additional EV registration fees by 2028 further burdens EV owners. 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:

SB 262—Exempt subdivision, water/sewer plans from environmental review, Sen. Forrest Mandeville (R-Columbus), Awaiting E.A., House Local Government, Oppose. SB 262 would exempt DEQ from having to conduct an environmental analysis under MEPA 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.

SB 436—Generally revise laws relating to exempt wells, Sen. Carl Glimm (R-Kila), Hearing, House Natural Resources, 3/26, 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, this bill 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.

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