

## Montana Senate Conservation Hotlist: Week of March 24, 2025

	SUPPORT	OPPOSE
HB 146	✓	
HB 264	✓	
HB 270	✓	
HB 271	✓	
HB 283	✓	
SJ 19	✓	
SJ 21	✓	
HB 122		X
HB 176		X
HB 258		X
HB 259		X
HB 285		X
HB 291		X
HB 490		X
HB 616		X
HB 623		X
HB 696		X
SB 307		X
SB 358		X
SB 385		X
SJ 14		X

### PLEASE SUPPORT:

**HB 146—Revising hunting license fees for cranes and swans, Rep. Gary Parry (R-Colstrip), Scheduled for Third Reading, 3/24, 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](mailto:peter@mtaudubon.org).

**HB 264—Generally revise wildlife location data subject to public information requests, Rep. Jonathan Karlen (D-Missoula), Hearing, Senate Fish and Game, 3/27, Support.** HB 264 would establish a prohibition on sharing wildlife location data and telemetry frequencies. It also provides an exception to allow the department to share location data with research partners and other government agencies through data-sharing agreements. Contact: Matt Leow, MT Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, 406-370-3183, [matt@tenaciouscampaigns.com](mailto:matt@tenaciouscampaigns.com).

**HB 270—Revise Remedies to MEPA, Rep. Katie Zolnikov (R-Billings), Passed Senate Natural Resources (10-1), Support.** HB 270 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. This bill 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), Awaiting E.A., House Judiciary, Support.** 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 283—Revise laws for hunting licenses lotteries, Rep. Tyson Running Wolf (D-Browning), Awaiting E.A., Senate Fish & Game, 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](mailto:matt@tenaciouscampaigns.com).

**SJ 19—Joint resolution to study public transportation, Sen. Andrea Olsen (D-Missoula), Passed Senate Highways & Transportation, Support.** SJ 19 would task an interim committee to study ways to improve public transit services in Montana, including exploring the establishment of a passenger transportation commission. Contact: Laura Collins, MEIC, 406-443-2520, [lcollins@meic.org](mailto:lcollins@meic.org).

**SJ 21—Interim study on interstate power grid development, Sen. Daniel Zolnikov (R-Billings), Awaiting Hearing, Senate Energy, Support.** SJ 21 would establish an interim study to evaluate potential benefits, legal considerations, and implementation strategies for entering into an interstate transmission

development compact for streamlining interstate electric transmission development for the benefit of Montana’s energy system reliability and affordability. 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).

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### PLEASE OPPOSE:

**HB 122—Revise right-of-way laws, Rep. Larry Brewster (R-Billings), Awaiting E.A., Senate Energy, Oppose.** HB 122 gives gas utilities default authorization to install pipeline infrastructure in the public right-of-ways (ROWs) of Montana's roads, streets, and highways. Gas utilities already can and do use public ROWs for this infrastructure by negotiating franchise agreements on a jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction basis. This bill threatens to override jurisdictional control and oversight for this process, allowing utilities to cut corners for installing future pipeline infrastructure that's environmentally damaging and threatens public safety. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, [nfitzmaurice@meic.org](mailto:nfitzmaurice@meic.org), or Gusty Catherin-Sauer, NPRC, 406-869-1911, [gusty@northernplains.org](mailto:gusty@northernplains.org).

**HB 176—Require unlimited wolf hunting quota when population is at or above 550 wolves, Rep. Shannon Maness (R-Dillon), Passed Senate Fish & Game, Oppose.** HB 176 requires an unlimited statewide quota on wolves while the population estimate remains greater than or equal to 550 wolves. Despite having a carve out for rule making authority to limit quotas near Yellowstone, this bill does not adequately address the economic impacts to local wildlife businesses. This bill could lead to the extermination of wolves in areas with small populations. Contact: Peter Dudley, MT Audubon, 406-443-3949, [peter@mtaudubon.org](mailto:peter@mtaudubon.org).

**HB 258—Requiring the extension of wolf hunting season, Rep. Paul Fielder (R-Thompson Falls), Passed 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. The 15-mile buffer amended into the bill is marginal and does not adequately protect Yellowstone wolves. Contact: Peter Dudley, MT Audubon, 406-443-3949, [peter@mtaudubon.org](mailto:peter@mtaudubon.org).

**HB 259—Revise fish and wildlife commission techniques for gray wolf management, Rep. Paul Fielder (R-Thompson Falls), Awaiting E.A., Senate Fish & Game, Oppose.** HB 259 requires the FWP commission to allow night vision and thermal scopes to be used during the wolf hunting season. Proponents argue that this clarifies the definition of night vision to include thermal scopes, but most importantly, it changes "may" to "shall." Contact: Peter Dudley, MT Audubon, 406-443-3949, [peter@mtaudubon.org](mailto:peter@mtaudubon.org).

**HB 285—Generally Revise Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), Rep. Brandon Ler (R-Savage), Hearing, Senate Natural Resources, 3/26, 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, require consideration of long-term productivity of the land and long term impacts from projects, and 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), Hearing, Senate Natural Resources, 3/26, Oppose.** HB 291 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. This bill would prevent the state from regulating greenhouse gases, as the federal government currently has no air pollution emission limits on greenhouse gases. 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 490—Revise Civil Liability Laws for utilities causing wildfires, Rep. Amy Regier (R-Kalispell), Hearing, Senate Judiciary, 3/26, Oppose.** HB 490 would shield utilities from liability when they cause wildfires. Although amendments to this bill improved it, the standard of care provision is ambiguous and unimplementable. The fire mitigation plan also does not require the utility to mitigate its impact to the climate, which is creating more severe wildfires, and the approving authorities created to oversee the plan do not have wildfire expertise. Contact: Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, [ahedges@meic.org](mailto:ahedges@meic.org).

**HB 616—Allow data modeling for mine bond release, Rep. Steve Gist (R-Cascade), Hearing, House Natural Resources, 3/28, Oppose.** HB 616 would allow for the coal company to provide its own predictive modeling to determine whether coal mines have achieved reclamation objectives and should receive bond release. While this bill may offer an additional tool for assessing reclamation, it does not provide the public with ready access to the modeling information to assure that the model and its assumptions are accurate and not subject to manipulation. Contact: Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, [caroline@northernplains.org](mailto:caroline@northernplains.org), or Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, [djohnson@meic.org](mailto:djohnson@meic.org).

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### PLEASE OPPOSE:

**HB 623—Revise laws related to nuclear energy, Rep. Gary Parry (R-Colstrip), Hearing, Senate Energy, 3/27, Oppose.** HB 623 would authorize the storage of radioactive nuclear waste on-site of any future nuclear energy facility developed in Montana. There exists no national repository for radioactive nuclear waste, which can remain harmful to humans for tens of thousands of years. Therefore, “temporary” storage could mean that dangerous waste remains on-site in Montana communities for hundreds if not thousands of years, posing tremendous risk to public health and the environment. Nuclear remains the most expensive energy source available and continues to fail to live up to its big promises. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, [nfitzmaurice@meic.org](mailto:nfitzmaurice@meic.org)

**HB 696—Approve the siting of uranium conversion and enrichment facilities, Rep. Gary Parry (R-Colstrip), Hearing, Senate Energy, 3/27, Oppose.** HB 696 would give legislative approval for the siting of hazardous uranium conversion and enrichment facilities in Montana to process any uranium mined in Montana, the US, or anywhere in the world. This would promote the development of a harmful uranium extraction industry in Montana while positioning the state as a regional default for hazardous uranium processing, inviting the transportation of these radioactive materials throughout the state on our public roadways with risk of accidents and contamination. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, [nfitzmaurice@meic.org](mailto:nfitzmaurice@meic.org).

**SB 307—Reallocate Montana marijuana tax revenue, Sen. Tom McGillvray (R-Billings), Awaiting Hearing, Senate Finance and Claims, Oppose.** SB 307 would strip vital funding from programs like Habitat Montana, state parks, trails, and nongame wildlife conservation (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: Kearnstyn Cook, MCV, 406-426-2422, [kearnstyn@mtvoters.org](mailto:kearnstyn@mtvoters.org), or Noah Marion, Wild Montana, 406-624-9622, [nmarion@wildmontana.org](mailto:nmarion@wildmontana.org).

**SB 358—Revise exempt water right laws, Sen. Wylie Galt (R-Martinsdale), Awaiting E.A., Senate Natural Resources, Oppose.** SB 358 requires metering and reporting for new wells, creates a petition for ground water analysis, and closes high density, high growth aquifers to new exempt wells—with exceptions that undermine the purpose of the closure areas. This bill also increases exempt water appropriations for new subdivisions outside of the controlled groundwater areas. Contact: Laura Collins, MEIC, (406) 443-2520, [lcollins@meic.org](mailto:lcollins@meic.org).

**SB 385—Create a general claims court, Sen. Tom McGillvray (R-Billings), Tabled, Senate Finance and Claims, Oppose.** SB 385 would create a special court, composed entirely of individuals appointed by the governor, 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). SB 385 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](mailto:djohnson@meic.org).

**SJ 14—Resolution to release federal wilderness study areas, Sen. Tony Tezak (R-Ennis), Hearing, Senate Energy, 3/25, 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: 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