

Montana Senate Conservation Hotlist: Week of April 14, 2025

	SUPPORT	OPPOSE
HB 271	✓	
HB 372	✓	
HB 477	✓	
HB 760	✓	
HB 762	✓	
HB 848	✓	
HJ 15	✓	
HB 587		X
HB 664		X
HB 685		X
HB 911		X
HJ 12		X
HJ 17		X

PLEASE SUPPORT:

HB 271—Provide that there is a limited executive privilege to the public records act, Rep. Ed Stafman (D-Bozeman), Awaiting E.A., Senate 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.

HB 372—Revise license fees used for funding of upland game bird enhancement program (UGBEP), Rep. Tom France (D-Missoula), Awaiting E.A., Senate Fish & Game, Support. HB 372 would increase funds allocated to the UGBEP, primarily through increasing non-resident game bird and combination license fees. The UGBEP funds habitat enhancement projects for wildlife, and promotes collaboration between landowners and FWP. 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), Third Reading, 4/14, Support. HB 477 would phase out the use of styrofoam containers through statewide uniform regulation. Montana would benefit from this bill 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, bcattton@meic.org, or Natalie Wright, MCV, 406-426-2645, natalie@mtvoters.org.

HB 760—Establish solar consumer protection laws, Rep. George Nikolakakos (R-Great Falls), Passed Senate Energy (13-0), Support. HB 760 keeps bad actors out of Montana related to solar sales. It codifies consumers' right to cancel a door-to-door solar contract within three business days of signing. Contact

Makenna Sellers, MREA, 406-850-4491, makenna@montanarenewables.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., Senate Fish & Game, Support. HB 762 requires FWP to publish a report on all river usage in several major river systems in Montana, thereby gathering 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), Passed Senate Highways & Transportation, 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 15—Resolution supporting increased transmission capacity in Montana, Sen. Greg Kmetz (R-Miles City), Passed Senate Energy, Support. HJ 15 shows legislative support for Montana's need to expand electric transmission capacity, emphasizing that affordable, reliable electricity needs. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, nfitzmaurice@meic.org, or Makenna Sellers, MREA, 406-850-4491, makenna@montanarenewables.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

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PLEASE OPPOSE:

HB 587—Revise mine reclamation laws, Rep. Gary Parry (R-Colstrip), Passed Senate Natural Resources, Oppose. HB 587 would redefine the term “material damage” under the Montana Surface and Underground Mine Reclamation Act and deviate from the federal definition. Under the proposed change, material damage would have to be demonstrated through an expensive and time-consuming statistical analysis “measured to a significant degree of confidence.” This definition will lead to water quality impacts outside of coal mines, and a more difficult process for citizens and adjacent landowners to hold coal mining companies and the DEQ accountable. Contact: Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, caroline@northernplains.org, or Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, djohnson@meic.org.

HB 664—Repeal numeric nutrient standards, Rep. Bill Mercer (R-Billings), Passed Senate Natural Resources, Oppose. HB 664 would repeal Montana’s water quality standards for nutrients and replace those with yet-to-be-determined and less protective narrative standards. The last attempt to replace the numeric standards with narrative standards led to a years-long saga that left us with a vague and indefensible rules package that was eventually withdrawn because it was so problematic. This bill pushes for standards less rooted in quantifiable, scientific data that would leave our fresh waters at risk. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, djohnson@meic.org, or Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, caroline@northernplains.org.

HB 685—Feasibility allowance for nondegradation policy, Rep. Steve Fitzpatrick (R-Great Falls), Passed Senate Natural Resources, Oppose. HB 685 would change Montana’s non-degradation policy, which is meant to “maintain and protect” Montana’s water quality. The bill would shift from what should be a “pollution prevention” approach to one of “pollution allowance,” through a “feasibility allowance” – an undefined term. Additionally, the most problematic section of the bill would remove the balancing of interests in Montana’s non-degradation policy, by eliminating the consideration of pollution and its impacts on the environment and society, and only considering the benefits of economic development. Contact: Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, caroline@northernplains.org, or Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, djohnson@meic.org.

HB 911—Revise the meaning of the term “public utility,” Rep. John Fitzpatrick (R-Anaconda), Hearing, Senate Energy, 4/15, Oppose. HB 911 would redefine what constitutes a public utility and allow a utility to create a separate entity within the utility to serve large customers with little to no PSC verification that existing residential and small business customers are protected. The PSC should be able to verify that the public utility isn’t charging existing ratepayers for infrastructure, upgrades, and maintenance costs of a power plant that is serving non-regulated large customers. There should be a well-defined firewall between the regulated portion of the utility and the portion of the company that provides unregulated power to large customers. This bill has no such safeguards, putting existing customers at significant risk. Contact: Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, ahedges@meic.org

HJ 12—Resolution regarding electric vehicles, Rep. Randyn Gregg (R-White Sulphur Springs), Awaiting E.A., Senate Energy, 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.

HJ 17—Resolution regarding energy, Rep. Steve Fitzpatrick (R-Great Falls), Awaiting E.A., Senate 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 more to bypass safeguards for protecting the public as well as protections for clean air, clean water and our public lands. Contact: Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, ahedges@meic.org.

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