



February 2021

Message from Executive Director



It's time to stand up for our public lands!

Your elected lawmakers just passed the halfway point of the 67th session of the Montana Legislature, and Montana Conservation Voters is hard at work in Helena. We're watching all bills closely, and we're working with all legislators to make sure they hear from YOU and the conservation community. Thank you for being the most important part of the democratic process!

One of our biggest challenges this year is to make sure our lawmakers fund public lands after voters overwhelmingly approved legalizing and taxing recreational cannabis last November. That initiative directs about half of the tax revenue from cannabis to fund state-owned public lands, specifically through programs like Habitat Montana.

But now lawmakers are trying to repurpose those funds and we're in danger of losing a great investment in our great outdoors unless YOU speak up.

MCV is teaming up to create a virtual gallery of Montanans who support his wise investment in our wildlife, state parks, trails and public access opportunities as voters intended by submitting a photo or video. We'll then share your support with Governor Greg Gianforte and the 67th Montana Legislature to ensure future generations of Montanans can enjoy the places we must never take for granted.

Please submit a 10-30 second cell phone video testimonial or a photo of you outside doing one of your favorite outdoor recreation activities with a one to three sentence testimonial asking our elected leaders to respect voters and invest the new revenue in conservation. Be sure to state your name, where you live, and keep your message short! Then please submit your testimonials to mcv@mtvoters.org by March 3.

Thanks in advance for helping us in this fight for our public lands!

Yours in conservation,



Whitney Tawney
Executive Director

Legislative Update

Every week on behalf of the conservation community, MCV updates our elected lawmakers on which bills we support and which bills we oppose via our [legislative hotlists](#). The Legislature is keeping us on our toes with the bills we oppose.

As always, we encourage our members to weigh in with their own representatives in the legislature. Not sure who to call? Try the main line at 406-444-3064 and learn more about how to participate at [MontanaPushback.org](#).

MCV, like many other organizations, strongly opposes voter suppression bills like House Bill 455, from Representative Lola Sheldon-Galloway of Great Falls. HB 455 would require voters to sign up for absentee ballots every year, and would prevent mail ballots from being sent to post office boxes. This would disenfranchise countless voters in our state, including indigenous people (many people who live on reservations rely only on PO boxes), the disabled, college students and even military personnel. Notably, the Montana Association of Clerks and Records also opposes this bill, saying it would only create more problems for voters, and would put Montana "sideways" with federal law.

We're also concerned about House Bill 320, which opens the door to the sale of public lands. This dangerous legislation is now before the Montana Senate. It comes from Representative Steve Gunderson of Libby.

Senate Bill 115, from Senator Keith Regier of Kalispell, would require the Montana Land Board to approve conservation easements paid for by hunters under the Habi-

MCV Newsroom

Congresswoman Deb Haaland of New Mexico is on track to become the nation's next Secretary of the Interior-- and the first indigenous woman to serve in a president's cabinet. We believe Congresswoman Haaland is the leader Montana and America needs right now to oversee our national parks, our BLM lands, and to serve as the federal government's top liaison to indigenous nations. She is tremendously qualified and she's approaching this job with a keen understanding of how to balance responsible energy development and job creation with our critical need to fight the crisis of climate change.

Sadly, Senator Steve Daines who will vote on Haaland's nomination is opposing her, claiming she supports "radical" views. If Senator Daines is concerned about radicalism, then he needs to finally answer tough questions about why he supported William Perry Pendley, the anti-public lands zealot who oversaw the Bureau of Land Management. We eagerly await his explanation.

Do you support Deb Haaland as America's next Interior Secretary? Please let Senator Daines know. Call his office at (202) 224-2651.

Stay Connected and Share!

Have you been tuning into the fourth season of MCV's podcast, [MCVcast](#)? We've had some amazing guests in 2021, and we've covered some very important issues. We recently had former

tat Montana program. This bill adds bureaucracy, creates uncertainty for families that want to protect their ranches and provide public access, and it will result in far fewer easements extending public access.

We do have some good news to share about House Bill 359, from Representative Larry Brewster of Billings. HB 359 would have effectively thrown a wrench in net metering, which allows customers who generate their own electricity to sell surplus power back to the grid. After getting lots of blowback, Rep. Brewster pulled his bill.

Again, we encourage all Montanans to weigh in on any of these bills. Call your lawmakers. Remind them who they work for, and what we are expecting from all of them.

Save the date

As the snow melts and plans fall into place for the spring, we're asking our members to SAVE THE DATE on Tuesday, April 6 ("406 Day"). On that day we'll join several other conservation organizations for a virtual and COVID-safe Public Lands Rally across the state. Stay tuned for further details, but please mark your calendars now!

Montana Conservation Voters is a 501(c)4 nonprofit organization, and membership dues and contributions are not tax-deductible. Tax-deductible contributions may be made to the MCV Education Fund, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Visit mtvotersedfund.org for more information.

U.S. Senator Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota on the show to chat about bridging the political divide in rural America. We've explored the new management of the National Bison Range, and how to protect our winters in the face of climate change, and much more. Subscribe to MCVcast wherever you listen to podcasts. And while you're at it, please follow us on social media! We're on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#)--all at @mtvoters.

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