

Happy March and Happy Spring, Montana Conservation Voters!

It's been a crazy month, with lots of action on critical issues as the Legislature entered the back half of Montana's 66th Legislative Session.

The good news is that any bill not related to revenue, appropriations, or constitutional amendments that did not pass one legislative chamber before the transmittal deadline in early March could not move forward, and thankfully some crummy bills have now died—in many cases thanks to folks like you for showing up and speaking out. Unfortunately, several misguided, bone-headed, or otherwise absurd ideas still have a chance to take away our freedoms and screw up the very things that make Montana the Last Best Place.

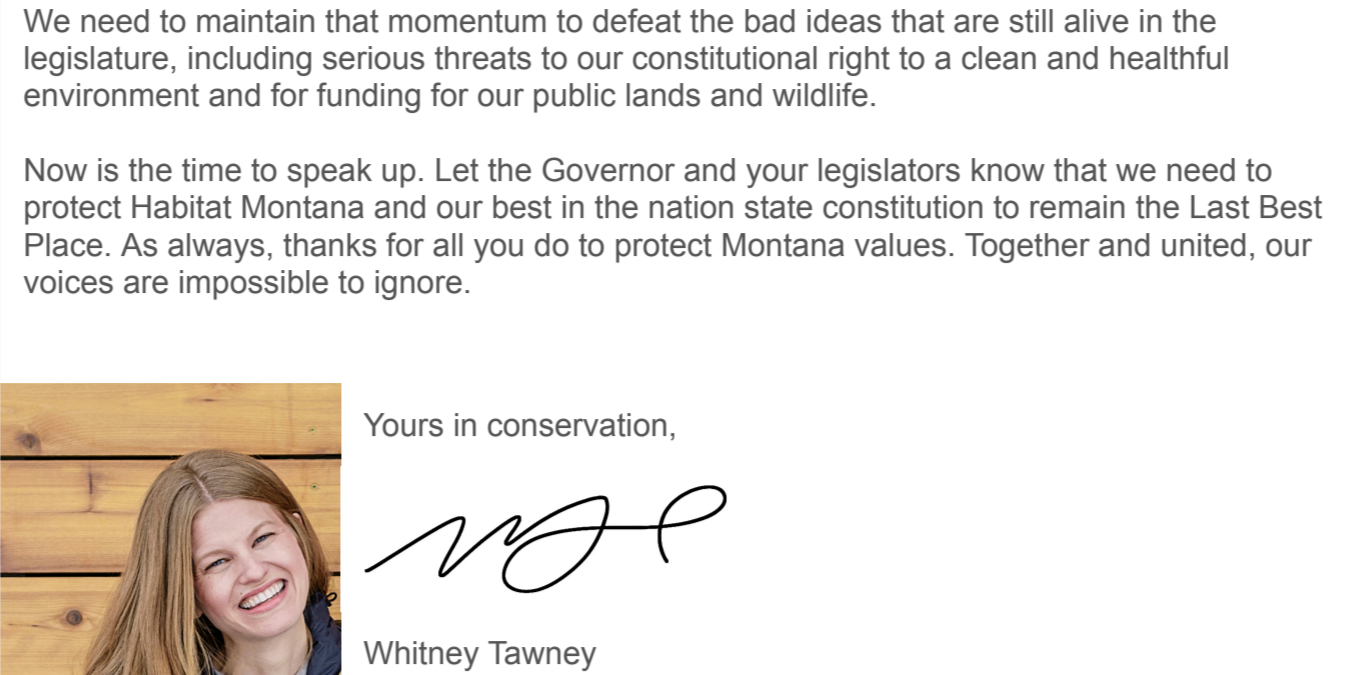
But Montanans are showing up. Halfway through the session, over 1,500 Montanans have made contact with their legislators via MontanaPushback.org and in March we rallied for public lands and for our state Constitution despite subzero temperatures and bad roads. We also had one terrific night at the Holter Museum in Helena for MCV's Annual Member Celebration.



Executive Director Whitney Tawney and Program Director Jocelyn Lehoucq taking the fight to D.C.

We need to maintain that momentum to defeat the bad ideas that are still alive in the legislature, including serious threats to our constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment and for funding for our public lands and wildlife.

Now is the time to speak up. Let the Governor and your legislators know that we need to protect Habitat Montana and our best in the nation state constitution to remain the Last Best Place. As always, thanks for all you do to protect Montana values. Together and united, our voices are impossible to ignore.



Yours in conservation,
 Whitney Tawney
 Executive Director
 Montana Conservation Voters

P.S. Join or renew for \$35 today and get a new MCV sticker to show off your support.

NEWS FROM THE STATE CAPITOL

FIRST, SOME WINS!

Stream Access Stays Our Right! SB 497 rejected
 SB 497 was a sneaky bill targeting prescriptive easements that would have harmed Montana's best-in-the-nation stream access laws. The Legislature tried to push this through at the 11th hour, but thanks to many of you, your Senators received thousands of messages urging them not to pass this bill and it died on the Senate floor, showing that grassroots advocacy and public lands access are still priorities in Montana.

Conservation Easements Win for Everyone. SB 357 rejected
 SB 357 would have done away with permanent conservation easements, making the maximum amount of time for a conservation easement 40 years. Perpetual conservation easements are important tools for wildlife habitat and large landscape conservation as well as for keeping farmers and ranchers on the landscape. This bill fortunately did not make it out of committee, ensuring that an important tool for conservation will remain in play.

BUT WE'RE STILL FIGHTING

Interfering with Local Solutions: SB 228 and HB 241
 Legislators are trying to take away the ability of municipalities and local governments to craft local solutions for their communities.

SB 228 would prohibit local governments from protecting public health, safety or welfare from any type of petroleum product (e.g. oil or gas). Cities and towns would lose autonomy to determine what kind of energy sources work best for their communities. One-size fits all approaches don't work for Montana communities. Visit this link to contact your legislator on SB 228.

HB 241 would prevent cities and municipalities from enacting solar-ready building codes that would require new construction in their jurisdictions to design and build homes in such a way that adding solar would be a cheap, convenient, and efficient option for building owners.

Stealing Habitat Money We Voted For: HB 669 & HB 462
 Lawmakers want to steal over millions of dollars in marijuana tax revenue from Habitat Montana, arguably the state's most successful and popular conservation program—the same program that helped pay for the new Big Snowy Mountains WMA and the recent Mt Huggin WMA addition. Legislators are plotting to steal this money forever, despite the fact that Montanans voted for recreational marijuana with the understanding that a significant share of the tax revenue it generated would go for habitat and wildlife conservation.

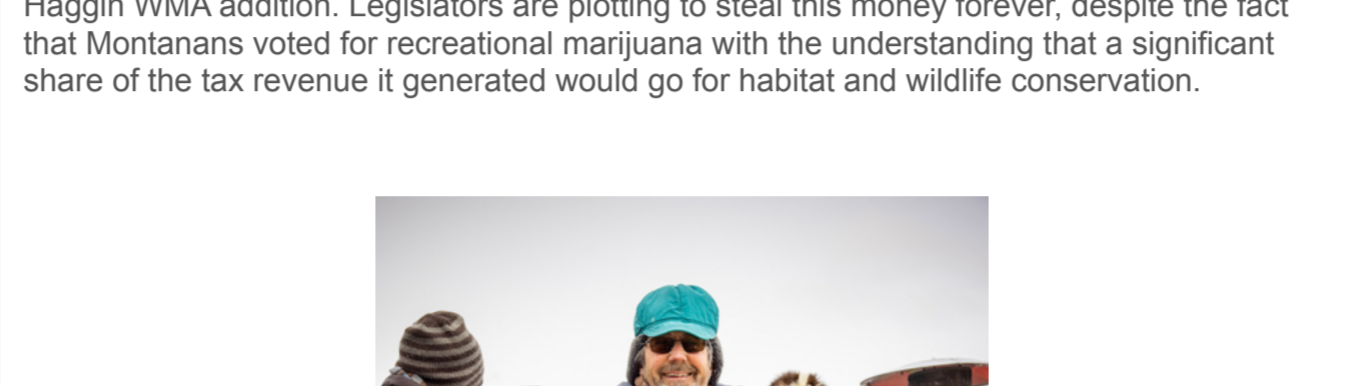


Photo via Wild Montana

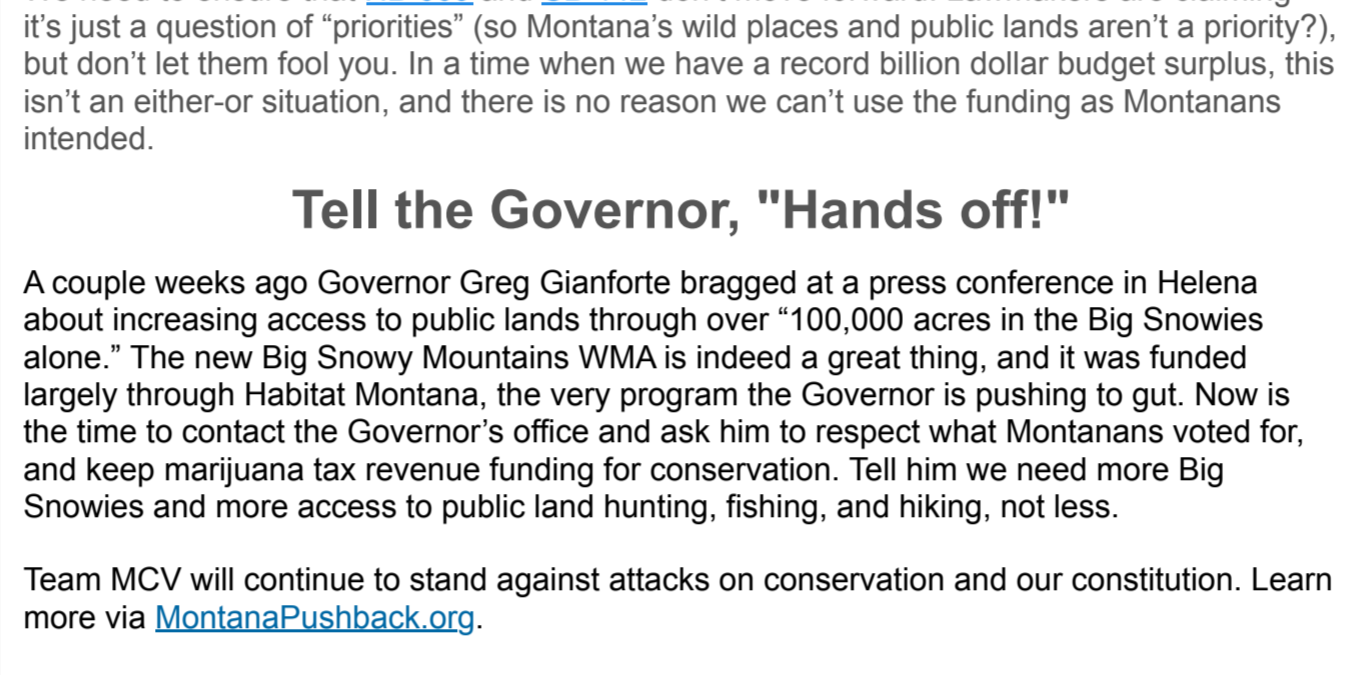
We need to ensure that HB 669 and SB 442 don't move forward. Lawmakers are claiming it's just a question of "priorities" (so Montana's wild places and public lands aren't a priority?), but don't let them fool you. In a time when we have a record billion dollar budget surplus, this isn't an either-or situation, and there is no reason we can't use the funding as Montanans intended.

Tell the Governor, "Hands off!"

A couple weeks ago Governor Greg Gianforte bragged at a press conference in Helena about increasing access to public lands through over "100,000 acres in the Big Snowies alone." The new Big Snowy Mountains WMA is indeed a great thing, and it was funded largely through Habitat Montana, the very program the Governor is pushing to gut. Now is the time to contact the Governor's office and ask him to respect what Montanans voted for, and keep marijuana tax revenue funding for conservation. Tell him we need more Big Snowies and more access to public land hunting, fishing, and hiking, not less.

Team MCV will continue to stand against attacks on conservation and our constitution. Learn more via MontanaPushback.org.

Montanans Show Up and Rally for Public Lands and the Constitution



"It's our right!" photo via Wild Montana.

In late February, over 500 Montanans gathered in Helena on the lawn of the Capitol in subzero temperatures to show their support for conservation and our public lands. The timing couldn't be better, given the threat to take away funding for Habitat Montana as well as the possibility of an Amendment that takes away our Constitutionally-guaranteed right to a "clean and healthful environment." Make no mistake, the threat to the Constitution is real, which is why just a couple weeks later Montanans rallied at the Capitol again, this time in the Rotunda for the Rally to Defend Montana's Constitution. Thanks to everyone who showed up at these critical events to fight for our rights. Do your part and visit montanapushback.org today and make your voice heard through the Action Center.



Montanans of all ages gathered in the Rotunda to tell lawmakers to stop playing around with our Constitution.

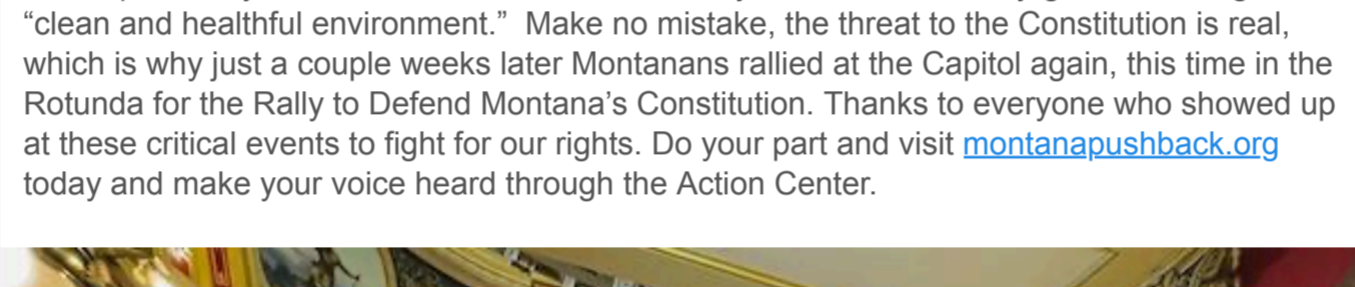


2023 Member Celebration
 Friday, March 3
 Holter Museum of Art
 Helena, MT

Supporting MCV's Mission

A successful 2023 Member Celebration

Over 150 people gathered at the Montana Conservation Voters' Annual Member Celebration at the Holter Museum of Art in Helena on Friday, March 3. Montana's Senior Senator, Jon Tester, joined state legislators, local elected officials, and conservation partners from across the state at the sold-out event to support MCV's mission to protect Montana's clean air and water and public lands.



Team MCV with U.S. Senator Jon Tester.

"At a time when special interest groups want to sell off Montana to the highest bidder, I'm proud to stand with MCV in the fight to keep our state the Last Best Place," said Senator Tester. "Our public lands and outdoor heritage create thousands of good paying jobs and priceless memories for Montana families, and MCV has worked for years to keep it that way. We can always count on them to do what's right for the Treasure State – and they'll always hold elected officials like me accountable to the people of Montana."

MCV Board Chair Jock Conyngham and Executive Director Whitney Tawney also addressed the crowd, highlighting some of the threats to Montana's environment and constitution coming from the current session of the Legislature.



THANK YOU to all who attended and to our sponsors, without whom this event would not be possible:

Platinum Sponsors

- The Keneda Fund
- Treasure State PAC
- Western Conservation Foundation

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- Robin Tawney Nichols and William Nichols
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- Liz Amersbacher
- Mary and Hal Williamson
- Montana Environmental Information Center
- Mike Nugent
- Navigate Campaigns
- Peter Falbot
- Renewable Northwest
- Sally Ericsson

DO YOU HAVE A BUSINESS AND ❤️ MCV?

Business partners across the state help bring our mission to life! Through our Partners for the Outdoors Program, you can support the MCV Education Fund in engaging, educating, and empowering Montanans to protect our Last Best Place while getting your brand out statewide throughout the year!

Want to support MCV and kick up your heels? It's not too early to consider sponsoring our 2023 Annual Gala. This lively bash brings more than 200 conservationists to Livingston each year, and we already have a surprise guest we can't wait for you to meet! Mark your calendar for October 13 and contact Renee at renee@mtvoters.org for more information about event sponsorship or silent auction ideas!

MEMBER OF THE MONTH

Chuck Tooley, Billings
 Veteran and former Mayor of Billings



Chuck and his wife Joanie enjoying Lake McDonald.

Why is conservation so important to you?

I believe that the majesty of our state reinforces the character of our people. I feel Montana in me as much as I feel a part of it. When I fill my lungs in wide open spaces or in forests or mountains or on the banks of a rushing stream, I shake a sense of unity with all nature. This feeling is familiar to many Montanans and I think the mystical connection we have with our treasured state can help us better relate to each other.

Why are you a member of MCV?

I support Montana Conservation Voters because I appreciate what they do to protect our clean air and water, our public lands, our climate and our future generations. Their work increases civic engagement in these vital issues and helps advance citizen participation in our democratic institutions.

SAVE THE DATES

June 5 - MCV Pint Night at Gild Brewing in Missoula
 August 18 - MCV Pint Night at Thirsty Street Brewing in Billings
 October 13 - MCV's Gala at the Depot in Livingston

Stay in touch as we confirm more events around Montana this summer, including pint nights in Bozeman and Whitefish!

Shop with a Purpose!

Support the MCV Education Fund while shopping on Amazon. Select the MCV Education Fund while shopping on Amazon and then Amazon will give 0.5% of eligible purchases to us! It's as simple as that.

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Paid for by Montana Conservation Voters
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