Montana Senate Conservation HOTLIST Week 13: April 1st, 2019

Please Support:

HB 78, Require public hearings for utility planning, Rep. Zac Perry (D-Hungry Horse), S-Energy & Telecommunications, Support. HB 78 requires for-profit utilities (i.e. NorthWestern Energy and Montana-Dakota Utilities) hold at least two public meetings as part of their long-term resource planning processes. All other major utilities in the northwest hold open planning meetings - only NorthWestern does not. Open planning meetings allow. Contact Brian Fadie, MEIC, 406.443.2520, bfadie@meic.org.

HB 513, Generally revise the renewable resource standard, Rep. Chris Pope (D-Bozeman), S-Energy 4/2, Support. HB 513 increases flexibility for utilities to comply with Montana's Community Renewable Energy Projects (CREPs) program. Contact Brian Fadie, MEIC, 406.443.2520, bfadie@meic.org.

Please Oppose:

HB 144, Eliminate certain tax credits, Rep. Alan Redfield (R-Livingston), S-Taxation, Oppose. HB 144 would harm solar jobs and deter local investment by thousands of Montanans by eliminating tax incentives for rooftop solar systems. Instead of seeking to help these new jobs and businesses grow, this bill bluntly targets net metering tax credits for elimination. When the Republican controlled legislature first passed net metering in 1999, it found that “it is in the public interest to promote net metering because it encourages private investment in renewable energy resources, stimulates Montana’s economic growth, and enhances the continued diversification of the energy resources used in Montana.” The elimination of these tax credits would do the exact opposite. Contact Andrew Valainis, Montana Renewable Energy Association, 406.214.9405, andrew@montanarenewables.org

HB 265, Revise laws related to approval of FWP easements, Rep. Kerry White (R-Bozeman), Senate Floor 4/1, Oppose. This bill adds an unnecessary layer of government to conservation easements for fish and wildlife habitat conservation and public hunting access. It would require state Land Board approval for conservation easements under the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Habitat Montana program and nullify a 2018 state Supreme Court ruling that found easements were not intended to go through the Land Board, and are final, once approved by the state Fish and Wildlife Commission. Contact Nick Gevock, Montana Wildlife Federation, 406.533.9432, ngevock@mtwf.org.

HB 279, Allow for wolf trapper expense reimbursement, Rep. Bob Brown (R-Thompson Falls), Senate Floor 4/1, Oppose. HB 279 would allow an Idaho-based group to pay trappers for wolves killed - amounting to a bounty on wolves that violates Montana’s long standing tradition of not paying people for the killing of game animals. Montana has a healthy ethical, fair chase hunting and trapping heritage that includes gray wolves. Bounties are unnecessary to meet our wildlife management objectives. Contact Nick Gevock, Montana Wildlife Federation, 406.533.9432, ngevock@mtwf.org.

HB 292, Extend coal board funding, Rep. Barry Usher (R-Billings), S-Taxation, Oppose. This would extend the increased share of revenue going to the coal board to 2023. The money could be used by local governments to deal with the impacts caused by increased or decreased coal production. Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406.461.9546, ahedges@meic.org

HB 332, Require county approval to relocate bison, Rep. Joshua Kasimier (R-Fort Benton), S-Agriculture, Oppose. This bill would require approval by a board of county commissioners prior to wild bison or wild buffalo being released into a county. This erodes FWP authority over wildlife, and the bill is written so that prohibiting bison in a county could be enforced by a county growth policy. This would be the only instance when a growth policy has regulatory power. The bill also requires transferred bison to
HB 403, Generally revise coal tax laws, Rep. Barry Usher (R-Billings), S-Energy, Oppose. HB 403 would indefinitely extend a temporary tax exemption for underground coal mines and cost state and local governments $3.4 million a year. Contact Anne Hedges, Montana Environmental Information Center, 461-9546, ahedges@meic.org.

HB 441, Repeal timber conservation license in lieu of sale, Rep. Kerry White (R-Bozeman), S-Natural Resources, Oppose. This bill repeals section 77-5-208 of the Montana Code, the section that allows the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation to offer conservation licenses in lieu of timber sales. Passed the House (70-29). Contact Amy Seaman, Montana Audubon, 406-210-9449, aseaman@mtaudubon.org or Whitney Tawney, Montana Conservation Voters, 202-412-4793, whitney@mtvoters.org.

HB 476, Provide low-interest loans for coal-fired generation, Rep. Jim Keane (D-Butte), Senate Floor 4/1, Oppose. HB 476 would authorize the Montana Board of Investments to offer low interest loans to NorthWestern Energy to pay for a coal unloading facility so the Colstrip plant can get coal from other coal mine’s instead of the Rosebud mine or buy an increased share of the Colstrip plant. Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, 461-9546.

HB 487, Revise RPS to include hydropower, Rep. Derek Skees (R-Kalispell), Senate Floor 4/1, Oppose. This bill would completely undermine Montana's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) goal of incentivizing new renewable energy by allowing 100+ year old hydroelectric dams to count toward the standard. Contact Brian Fadie, MEIC, 406.443.2520, bfadie@meic.org.

HB 550, Revise definition of public road in gas tax laws, Rep. Alan Redfield (R-Livingston), S-Highways & Transportation 4/2, Oppose. HB 550 seeks to redefine certain roads under the tax code. It seeks to remove some roads from the gas tax maps and could have the effect of eliminating roads that the public uses to access public lands. Contact Nick Gevock, Montana Wildlife Federation, 406.533.9432, ngevock@mtwf.org.

HJ 28, Joint resolution requesting denial of American prairie reserve grazing permit, Rep. Dan Bartel (R-Lewistown), S-Agriculture, Oppose. HJ 28 singles out the non-profit conservation group the American Prairie Reserve and calls for the BLM to deny its application to change its grazing leases to allow year-round grazing of its bison. Please OPPOSE this bad resolution that would set a precedent that the Legislature can single out individuals or organizations. Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, 406. 533.9432, ngevock@mtwf.org.