Please Support:

HB 292, Extend funding to coal board, Rep. Barry Usher (R-Billings), S-Finance & Claims 4/8, Support. 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, Montana Environmental Information Center, 406.461.9546, ahedges@meic.org

HJ 38, Interim study of bonding and decommissioning for energy resources, Rep. Daniel Zolnikov (R-Billings), S-Energy, Support. HJ 38 calls for a study of existing laws related to bonding, decommissioning, and reclamation for power plants in Montana of all fuel types. Contact Brian Fadie, Montana Environmental Information Center, 406.443.2520, bfadie@meic.org.

Please Oppose:

SB 93, Require decommissioning and bonding for certain solar, Sen. Tom Richmond (R-Billings) Returned to Senate with House Amendments, Oppose. SB 93 only requires solar power plants to post decommissioning bonds, not coal or gas power plants. Last session a bill passed that only targeted wind energy with this requirement. Now this bill only targets solar. Yet coal and gas power plants, which create far more pollution, do not have this requirement. SB 93 does not actually accomplish the intended goal of seeing power plants decommissioned and the sites reclaimed. Coal and gas plants must be included. Contact Brian Fadie, Montana Environmental Information Center, 406.443.2520, bfadie@meic.org

SB 300, Generally revise property laws to protect property rights, Sen. Kenneth Bogner (R-Miles City), Returned to Senate with House Amendments, Oppose. SB 300 would create a basic right to use property. This is a broad expansion of property rights that could result in a new takings claim. Amendments could fix the bill but if they aren’t applied, the bill should be defeated. Contact Anne hedges, Montana Environmental Information Center, 406.461.9546, ahedges@meic.org

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 Third Reading 4/8, 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 292, Extend coal board funding, Rep. Barry Usher (R-Billings), Hearing S-Finance & Claims 4/8 9am, 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, Montana Environmental Information Center, 406.461.9546, ahedges@meic.org

HB 332, Require county approval to relocate bison, Rep. Joshua Kassmier (R-Fort Benton), Senate Third Reading 4/8 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 be certified as brucellosis free. Contact Amy Seaman, Montana Audubon, 406.210.9449, aseaman@mtaudubon.org
HB 403, Generally revise coal tax laws, Rep. Barry Usher (R-Billings), Hearing S-Energy 4/9 3pm, 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 625, Eliminate numeric nutrient standards for water quality laws, Rep. Bill Mercer (R-Billings), Hearing S-Natural Resources 4/8, Oppose. HB 625 would eliminate the numeric nutrient standards under Montana’s water quality act. Nutrients are one of the leading causes of water quality impairment in Montana’s rivers, streams, and lakes. Because of the extensive impacts associated with nutrients, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) developed numeric water quality criteria. Montana’s nutrient standards were adopted and approved in 2015 by the EPA. Montana is obligated to combat nutrient pollution through nutrient standards, and any attempt to repeal the standards is not in conformity with the U.S. Clean Water Act. Contact Derf Johnson, Montana Environmental Information Center, djohnson@meic.org, 406.581.4634

HB 723, Provide for review of income tax credits, Rep. Dave Fern (D-Whitefish), Hearing S-Taxation 4/9, Oppose. HB 723 repeals the rooftop solar tax credit and an important energy efficiency tax credit in 2021. There has been no review or justification for putting these credits on a repeal list and there's no evidence to support 2021 as the repeal date. Contact Brian Fadie, Montana Environmental Information Center, 406.210.7591, bfadie@meic.org

HB 764, Generally revise electric vehicle laws, Rep. Denley Loge (R-St. Regis), S-Highways & Transportation, Oppose. HB 764 puts a $100 annual additional fee on all electric vehicle and plug-in electric vehicle registrations. At last estimate there were less than 500 electric vehicles in Montana, putting this technology squarely in the very early adopter phase. These vehicles help reduce local air pollution across Montana, but HB 764 makes no account of these benefits. Contact Brian Fadie, Montana Environmental Information Center,, 406.443.2520, bfadie@meic.org

HJ 28, Joint resolution requesting denial of American prairie reserve grazing permit, Rep. Dan Bartel (R-Lewistown), Senate Third Reading 4/8, 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, Montana Wildlife Federation, 406. 533.9432, ngevock@mtwf.org

The Weekly Hotlist is published as an educational service to lawmakers and citizens by the Conservation Working Group, comprised of the organizations listed below. Contact Alex Rich, Montana Conservation Voters at 406.254.1593 ext. 2.