



These Bills All Should Be Vetoed

The 2017 Montana Legislature has adjourned, *sine die* (Latin for “without [setting a] day [to return]. MEIC had incredible success in stopping a number of bad bills in their tracks, in large part thanks to the help of our members and supporters who contacted their legislators. It was a lot of work for you, we know, but well worth it! Thank you for all that you did!

We’ve already asked a lot of you this session, but we need you to do one more thing. There are seven bad bills that passed and are now heading to the governor. These bills threaten Montana’s clean water, clean air, wild landscapes, and Montanans’ right to a clean and healthful environment. Gov. Steve Bullock is deciding right now whether to veto these terrible ideas, or allow them to become law.

Please take a minute and let him know you want him to veto them all. They deserve only to be tossed into the dustbin of history. You can contact the governor at (406) 444-3111 or governor@mt.gov.

Environmental Protection, and Public Health and Safety

SB 337 (Sen. Duane Ankney, R-Colstrip)

This bill would eliminate the Montana Board of Environmental Review. The BER has oversight authority over the Department of Environmental Quality for rule making, as well as deciding on challenges to DEQ’s permit decisions and enforcement actions. The BER acts as an independent body that determines whether DEQ is following the law and whether rules need to be changed to better protect the environment, and public health and safety. Polluting industries are upset that the BER has refused to rubber stamp every DEQ permit for water discharges and coal mine expansions. Eliminating the BER would be a significant blow to the public’s ability to hold DEQ accountable.

Fossil Fuels

SB 235 (Sen. Tom Richmond, R-Billings)

This bill would allow the State Land Board to extend the duration of coal leases beyond the customary 10-year term if the Board finds that doing so would be in the “best interest of the state.” The bill could result in a lease renewal for the Otter Creek coal tracts if Arch Coal fails to develop its proposed mine by the end of its current 10-year lease. The bill would also mean that the State would forego the possible additional revenue from new leases.

SB 93 (Sen. Tom Richmond, R-Billings).

This bill would replace rules recently adopted by the Montana Board of Oil and Gas Conservation that required drilling operators to notify homeowners and businesses within a certain distance of a new well before beginning drilling. This bill would reduce the distance used to determine who is notified from 1,320 feet to 990 feet and remove schools, hospitals, and offices from the notification requirements.

Clean Energy

SB 154 (Sen. Mike Lang, R-Malta).

This bill would harm the prospects for solar jobs and investments in Montana by eliminating the modest existing incentives for net-metered electricity systems. Montana’s solar industry is on the cusp of explosive growth. This bill would discourage growth in these clean energy jobs and businesses. When

Contact your legislators

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Visit www.meic.org for profiles and contact information of every Montana legislator.

By Phone:

Leave a message for your legislator: **(406) 444-4800** between 7:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 8 a.m. until adjournment on Saturday.

By Mail:

Montana Senate
P.O. Box 200500
Helena, MT 59620-0500

Montana House of Representatives
P.O. Box 200400
Helena, MT 59620-0400

MEIC Bill Tracker:

Visit www.meic.org for our legislative bill tracker. Our bill tracker provides you with up-to-date information on proposed legislation and the ability to contact sponsors, committee members, and the Governor.



MEIC Lobbyists from left to right: Brian Fadie, Jim Jensen, Anne Hedges, & Derf Johnson

Capitol Monitor is a publication of the Montana Environmental Information Center designed to keep members informed about environmental issues at the Montana legislature.

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the Republican-controlled legislature authorized 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.” This remains true today and the State should continue to promote small-scale solar installations, not discourage them.

HB 205 (Rep. Alan Redfield, *R-Livingston*).

This bill, as amended, would impose a \$95 annual fee on electric vehicles and increase the fee \$3 for every one-cent increase in the gasoline tax. There are only about 400 electric vehicles in Montana, putting them squarely in the early adopter phase for an important new technology. These vehicles benefit Montana by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants and help move the nation away from reliance on foreign oil and international conflicts. No calculation was made of the value of these benefits. Disincentives for this new technology do not make sense at this time.

Water

HB 339 (Rep. Carl Glimm, *R-Kila*).

This bill would functionally overturn a Montana Supreme Court decision announced last year by again exempting most water wells drawing less than 35 gallons per minute from having to obtain a water right. Its impact will be to deplete stream flows, undermine senior water rights, increase sprawl, and spark conflict among water users. It is irresponsible to put development before water security, senior water rights, and Montana’s prized fisheries. It’s also bad science, imposing arbitrary guidelines for water use in a state with complex hydrology and already over-allocated streams.

SB 248 (Sen. Mark Blasdel, *R-Kalispell*).

This bill would allow anyone using the family transfer exemption in the Subdivision and Platting Act to also be guaranteed an exemption from obtaining a water right for a well that pumps up to 35 gallons per minute. This would eliminate any checks on the location of the new well and on whether it would have any impact on neighboring water wells or sewage disposal systems. The family transfer exemption is already a harmful loophole in the subdivision law, and this bill would compound the problem.



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