

WEEKLY REPORT
Missoula
Week Ending 3-12-2021

WEEK IN REVIEW

HB259: Revise property and zoning laws.

Position: OPPOSE

Heard in Senate Local Government on Friday 3/12. Opponents had a good showing and continued to make a case that this is not the right approach and that better legislation, if actually needed, could come from the builders working with local government. We made that offer again and got a “we’ll look at amendments” answer from the lobbyist. No real intent or interest in discussing. MacDonald and Rossi have a dinner scheduled on Tuesday with the chair of the committee and we are working to get some influential opponents to hit him up offline.

SB358: Repeal numeric nutrient standards for water quality

Position: SUPPORT

We continue to assist the league on this after we were able to revive it from committee. We coordinated efforts to get input from clients on the amendments that have been offered by the DEQ. This bill continues to be a work in progress and is scheduled for a hearing later this month.

SB178: Prohibiting state building codes from requiring mandatory fire sprinklers.

Position: OPPOSE

Heard in Senate Judiciary on 3/12. Fire chiefs and fire union folks took the lead on this one. The bill came up last minute and quickly made its way through the Senate before much opposition could be organized. We will continue to assist, but the chiefs have done a good job taking the lead on this so far.

SB257: Prohibit local governments from imposing carbon fees, penalties or taxes

Position: MONITOR AMENDED VERSION

Bill passed House Tax after a hearing on 3/11. We were able to get this bill amended on the Senate side with the sponsor’s OK to address issues that it might inadvertently prevent local communities from partnering with industry on “green tariff” projects. The amended version addresses that. There is still some opposition from environmental groups to the amended version and they spoke at a hearing in House tax. We monitored. The sponsor has indicated he is unlikely to support additional amendments.

SB215: Establish the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

Position: OPPOSE

Hearing in House Judiciary on 3/11. Opponents again turned out in force, including a large American Indian caucus raising concerns about native religious issues. We continue to oppose

due to the bill's apparent aim at legitimizing the ability to claim religious freedom to discriminate against others. Kelly Lynch with the league spoke too about the potential impacts of land use issues.

HB281: Revise laws related to E bikes.

Position: MONITOR

Passed Senate Highways and Transportation on 3/11.

This bill originally was not on our priority list because it did not have any impacts to local government. But amendments made in the House appeared to hamper or prohibit local government's ability to restrict the use of certain e-bikes on trails intended for foot or non-motorized traffic. Additional amendments APPEAR to have addressed this, giving local governments the ability to regulate for "safety" issues on trails. We will need to continue to monitor this bill for changes. We spoke with the sponsor and he appears ready to push the bill forward in its current form.

NEXT WEEK:

The week of 3/15 appears fairly busy. Bills that we know of now are listed, but we expect additional legislation to be scheduled for hearings this week.

HB137: Generally revise vaping and alternative nicotine product laws.

Position: OPPOSE

Set for hearing on 3/16 in Senate Business and Labor.

This bill is likely in direct response to Missoula's ordinance banning the sale of vaping products within city limits. The sponsor is owner of a vaping shop company in the Bitterroot. Supporters of the bill make successful arguments that local governments should not have the ability to ban the sale of legal products within their borders.

HB258, HB436 and HB504, Various firearms laws limiting local government ability to regulate.

Position: OPPOSE

All three of these are being heard on 3/16 in Senate Judiciary.

HB269: Require elected official approval of sanitation related to local health board rules.

Position: OPPOSE

Set for hearing on 3/15 in Senate Local Government.

Another in the series of bills to limit the authority of local government health boards. This requires that all decisions by a health board or other entity regarding sanitation be approved by an elected board.