

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN
WEEKS 1 & 2 - JANUARY 18, 2019

Making our voices heard in support of Clean Energy

The train has left the station and it's building up speed...

The Montana legislative session always inspires colorful analogies – some whimsical and amusing, some dark and cynical. The metaphor that is rolling through the Capitol this week is a hulking train finally leaving the station and slowly gaining speed. While there is still a bit of a “honeymoon” feel in the halls, some lines are being drawn. Some good proposals are emerging as well as many perennial bad ideas – ideas that we’ve fought before – with implications for our water quality, family farms and ranches, and way of life.

Northern Plains members and allies rally at the Capitol in the name of “Clean Power for All”

As this Legislative Bulletin goes to print, we’re putting the final touches on the carpool logistics to get our members from all over the state to Helena on Wednesday to rally for clean energy at our “Clean Power for All” Day of Action. We’re expecting more than a hundred rally attendees. If you’re one of them, THANK YOU for backing up your values by coming to this January 23rd rally!

Northern Plains’ approach to the legislature has always been centered on the values and opinions of our members. We win when our members are willing to step up and speak out – whether it’s by calling and emailing your legislators, submitting letters-to-the-editor, or coming to the Capitol to lobby and testify. This can be FUN as well as impactful!

WHAT YOU CAN DO

ABOUT THE LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN: This is the first *paper* Legislative Bulletin of 2019, which we mail to members in Montana every two weeks.

Members will also receive a Legislative e-Bulletin every Friday, summarizing the week’s happenings at the Legislature.

**If you don’t get emails from us, we can easily update your communication preferences to make sure you don’t miss important updates this session! To update your email address and/or to opt out of receiving the paper Legislative Bulletin and ONLY receive the electronic version, just email info@northernplains.org.



HELLO!
THIS IS LIBERTY SPEAKING

PHONE TREE: If you haven’t already signed up for our phone tree, please call Rachel at (406) 248-1154 or email rachel@northernplains.org. If you have signed up, we will be mailing your phone tree soon!

ACTION ALERTS: If we have your current email address, we will be emailing you with time-sensitive actions to take during the legislature. Thank you for monitoring your email daily and taking action!

TEXT ALERTS: This year, we will be activating our members with text alerts. Sign up on our website at <https://northernplains.org/phone-power/> or call Olivia at (406) 248-1154.

WEBSITE: Go to www.northernplains.org and click on the *Legislature* tab for daily updates and helpful links.



LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Commercial Property-Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE)

Energy efficiency and renewable energy upgrades to buildings will conserve energy and save property owners money. Still, the up front costs pose a barrier for many Montanans.

At Northern Plains, we have a solution to overcome this financing gap so that we can save money, conserve energy, and create jobs – Commercial Property-Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE).

The bill we are working with is sponsored by Sen. Kenneth Bogner (R-Miles City), and the current bill draft number is **LC 1835**.

This idea, successful in dozens of other states across the country, is a necessary tool in increasing the value and profitability of Montana businesses and modernizing Montana's energy landscape.

C-PACE allows local banks to finance upgrades such as new HVAC systems, LED lighting retrofits, and solar installations, with financing attached to the property through a lien, not a loan to the property owner. C-PACE financing is an investment in the property, not a loan to the property owners.

When the ownership of the property changes hands, the assessment stays with the property and the new owner takes over repayment.

C-PACE financing is designed so the annual energy savings resulting from these upgrades is greater than the assessment on the annual property tax bill, keeping property owner's cash flow positive.

C-PACE establishes that clean energy improvements serve a public purpose and allows us to finance these upgrades just like we do streetlights, parks, sidewalks – as an assessment on our property tax bill.

Assessment financing has been used in the United States for decades to fund improvements to private properties that meet a public purpose. Saving energy while creating jobs is such a purpose.

Montanans from all walks of life support C-PACE because it's a solution that will save money, create good-paying local jobs, drive economic development, and fight climate change.

C-PACE is a real solution for a brighter energy future in Montana. It's a top priority bill for us. It will be introduced soon and we expect a hearing possibly in early February. Stay tuned!

Country-of-Origin Labeling bill to be introduced soon!

Sponsored by Sen. Al Olszewski (R-Kalispell), this bill, currently bill draft number **LC 1273**, would re-instate a country-of-origin labelling program in Montana by requiring retailers to display placards informing consumers where the meat in their counters comes from. It would also prohibit the advertising of protein products derived from cell-culture technologies in laboratories as "meat." We are working in alliance with the Montana Cattlemen's Association and Montana Farmers Union on this bill and hope to see it introduced soon and scheduled for a hearing possibly in early February. Keep your eyes peeled for further updates!



BILL POSITIONS

BILLS WE SUPPORT

LC 1835 (C-PACE) - *See Page 2*

LC 1273 (COOL) - *See Page 2*

SB 97: REQUIRE BETTER ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW FOR OIL PIPELINES

Sponsored by **Sen. Frank Smith**, (D-Poplar), this bill would require a more thorough environmental review of major oil pipelines like the Keystone XL, including evaluating impacts on heritage sites. SB 97 has a hearing date of January 23 in the **Senate Natural Resources Committee**.

HB 22: LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY

Sponsored by **Rep. Laurie Bishop (D-Livingston)** this bill would extend the contract length for renewable energy projects to 25 years to make them more competitive for inclusion in Montana's utilities' energy portfolios—a necessary step to encourage the transition to clean, renewable energy. We expect HB 22 to be scheduled for a hearing in the **House Federal Relations, Energy, and Telecommunications Committee** soon.

HB 118: GET THE LEAD OUT...OF MONTANA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Sponsored by **Rep. Julie Dooling** (R-Helena), this bill would create a grant program to pay for removing lead from the drinking water in Montana schools – an invisible but serious health threat to our children and our communities. We expect that the bill will be heard in the **House Natural Resources Committee** soon.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR DAILY UPDATES
OF BILLS WE SUPPORT & OPPOSE.



THEN CALL YOUR REPRESENTATIVES
AND MAKE YOUR VOICE KNOWN!

BILLS WE OPPOSE

SB 28: TAX GIVEAWAY TO OIL COMPANIES

Sponsored by **Sen. Tom Richmond** (R-Billings), this bill would keep the state tax rate for any oil produced through “enhanced oil recovery”—pumping carbon dioxide or other gases or chemicals in the ground to increase production in old and low-performing wells—at the low level of 5.8% vs. 9% or 12% if the price goes over \$54 a barrel. This is a giveaway to oil companies that deprives state coffers of much-needed funds. This bill was heard on January 11 in the **Senate Taxation Committee**. **TAKE ACTION:** Contact members of the Senate Taxation Committee and tell them to vote no on SB 28!

SB 33: LIMIT THE PUBLIC'S RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN SUBDIVISION DECISIONS

Sponsored by **Sen. Tom Richmond** (R-Kalispell), this bill would reduce transparency and public participation in the subdivision approval process for phased developments. It eliminates existing public hearing requirements in subdivision reviews and requires governing authority to certify a subdivision's application for completeness within 20 days for each phase of development. We expect that this bill will be heard by the **Senate and Local Government Committee** soon.

HB4: THE BILL TO BULLY WASHINGTON STATE OVER COAL EXPORT

Sponsored by **Rep. Joe Read** (R-Ronan), House Joint Resolution 4 would send a message from the Montana legislature to the federal government to take action against the state of Washington for denying a permit to the Millennium Bulk Terminal Port Facility. Millennium would allow for a massive increase of coal exports from Montana which would mean hundreds of additional coal trains travelling through Montana towns and cities bringing traffic, noise, and increased danger of derailment all while undermining vital work to move away from energy sources that amplify climate change. Ultimately, the courts may decide this issue—the Montana legislature should focus on the pressing issues facing our state rather than wasting time with meaningless resolutions encouraging the federal government to meddle in state affairs. The bill will be heard by the **House Natural Resources Committee** on **January 30**. **TAKE ACTION:** Contact members of the committee and tell them to vote it down.



LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN
JAN. 18, 2019

Why phone trees, calling your legislators matter

This year, we have more than 300 members participating in our 2019 legislative phone tree!

When a good bill needs support to pass, or a bad bill needs to be blocked, one of the most effective ways to reach a legislator is by calling the main switchboard at **(406) 444-4800** and leaving a message with with a secretary or legislative aide.

Our phone tree participants have each agreed to call a handful of members, who in turn call a combination of members and their legislators, so that **a dozen calls multiply into hundreds of calls to legislators.**

When calling the legislature, you can leave a message for up to five legislators or you can request that the message go to an entire committee. Keep your message simple so that it holds its form as it gets passed along to the legislator/committee.

These messages keep legislators accountable – it's hard to ignore 30 messages on a desk all advocating for the same action. When you can't physically make it to Helena, your voice still carries important weight.

The Capitol switchboard is staffed 7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday - Friday, and approximately 7:30 a.m. - noon on some Saturdays.

SAVE THE DATE!

Did you know one of the *most effective* ways to influence decision-makers is through citizen lobbying? Join us in **Red Lodge on Feb. 11** and learn how to be an effective citizen lobbyist. Gain the tools and confidence to make a difference in Helena!

For questions or to sign up, contact Sydney at (406) 248-1154 or email sydney@northernplains.org.

Citizen Lobby Training

Monday, Feb. 11 at 5 PM
Carnegie Library (basement)
3 8th Street, Red Lodge, MT

Free soup will be served!

