Billings Chamber Priorities

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

[SB 19](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC0317?open_tab=sum) - Revise sentencing laws related to theft  
Sen. Barry Usher (R) (SUPPORT)

This bill re-adjusts theft penalties that were lowered in 2017 in an effort to reduce jail populations. The result was a full jail and criminals continuing to commit theft. The bill raises the penalties for the first offense of up to $1,500 in property theft to a maximum fine of $1,500, up to 6 months imprisonment, or both. Currently, the penalty is a fine up to $500, a mere 1/3 of the what the value of theft could be. It also increases the fine for property theft over $1,500 from up to $10,000 to up to $50,000, or 10 years in prison, or both.  We were supportive of this bill, SB 95, last session. Public safety continues to be our #1 priority at the Chamber. We cannot let crime crowd out commerce in Montana's City.

[HB 287](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC1790?open_tab=sum) - Generally revise laws related to dangerous drugs  
Rep. Denise Baum (D) (SUPPORT)

The bill aims to revise laws related to dangerous drugs by introducing enhanced penalties for individuals who possess or use a firearm while committing certain drug-related offenses. If a person is found guilty of criminal distribution or possession with intent to distribute dangerous drugs and is also found to have knowingly possessed or used a firearm during the commission of the offense, they will face an additional sentence of imprisonment ranging from 2 to 10 years, in addition to the penalties for the underlying drug offense. The intent is to deter such offenses and address the intersection of drug abuse and gun violence in Montana.

[HB 332](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC3422?open_tab=sum) – Generally revise youth court laws  
Rep. Bill Mercer (R) (SUPPORT)

This bill revises the Youth Court Act, a decades-old statute that is in need of an update. The bill expands the range of offenses that youth can be prosecuted for in district court. For youth aged 12 and older, new offenses include aggravated sexual intercourse without consent. For youth aged 16 and older, new offenses include negligent vehicular homicide while under the influence, kidnapping, aggravated sex trafficking, child sex trafficking, and others. It also removes offenses such as burglary and criminal possession of dangerous drugs.

[HB 493](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC1791?open_tab=sum) – Establish the crime of possession of stolen firearm or ammunition  
Rep. Steve Kelly (R) (SUPPORT)

This bill establishes the crime of possession of a stolen firearm or ammunition with a penalty of prison time not to exceed 10 years. In 2023 almost 200 firearms were stolen from vehicles in Billings. Unfortunately, those stolen firearms may eventually be used in the commission of another crime, usually violent. Creating a penalty for the offense will make criminals have to think twice about carrying a stolen firearm with them, even if they aren't intending to commit a crime in the near future. Simply having a stolen firearm could cost them 10 years.

[SB 204](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC0989?open_tab=sum) – Sunset or reapprove existing voter approved property tax levies  
Sen. Greg Hertz (R) (OPPOSE)

This bill requires voter reapproval of all voted levies every 10 years. Billings has a voter-approved, 10 mill transit levy for funding bus service. Billings has a voter-approved, 5 mill library levy to fund operations, maintenance, and capital improvements of our library. But what is most important to us is the 114 mills of public safety levies spread across three separate votes. Should the bill pass, the likelihood of voters turning down our public safety mill levies is low probability but highly consequential. Estimates suggest Billings would have to cut half of its police and fire personnel.

**HOUSING SUPPLY**

[HB 21](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC0243?open_tab=sum) - Establish a Montana workforce housing tax credit  
Rep. Larry Brewster (R) (SUPPORT)

For eligible low-income projects, a credit may be claimed for each year of a 6-year period beginning with the tax year in which the project was placed in service. The Board of Housing is permitted to allocate up to $1.5 million in credits each year. The bill will reduce general fund revenues by $9 million once fully implemented.

[HB 492](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC0886?open_tab=sum) – Revise municipal zoning laws related to parking requirements  
Rep. Katie Zolnikov (R) (SUPPORT)

This bill prohibits government from requiring more than one parking space per dwelling unit. It prohibits government from imposing any parking requirement for existing/vacant buildings undergoing a change of use, childcare facilities, residential units under 1,200 sq ft, deed-restricted affordable housing, and assisted living facilities. This bill returns the decision of parking spaces to builders, developers, and property owners who know their needs better than government.

[SB 121](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC0016?open_tab=sum) - Revise the land use planning act  
Sen. Forrest Mandeville (R) (SUPPORT)

This bill would provide minor changes to the landmark Montana Land Use Planning Act, passed last session to require Montana's largest cities to evaluate housing needs for the next 20 years and then adjust land use and zoning laws to allow for the construction of the needed housing. This update adds clarity, provides certain allowances, and revises definitions. We were supportive of SB 382 last session, and optimistic of the long-term housing benefits Montana will experience once cities are officially in compliance with the MT Land Use Planning Act.

[HB 378](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC3842?open_tab=sum) – Remove the restriction on inclusionary zoning  
Rep. Debo Powers (D) (OPPOSE)

This bill removes the statutory prohibition on implementing inclusionary zoning, a policy that would require developers to include a certain percentage of affordable housing units in new residential developments. Inclusionary zoning is a one-step forward and two-steps-back policy. A [study at UC Berkley](https://ternercenter.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Inclusionary-Zoning-Paper-April-2024-Final.pdf) indicates that inclusionary zoning policies reduce overall housing production and increase rents and/or housing prices.

[SB 213](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC0412?open_tab=sum) – Revise the state building code to allow single stairwells in certain buildings  
Sen. Daniel Zolnikov (R) (SUPPORT)

The bill requires the Department of Labor and Industry to permit buildings of R-2 occupancy (buildings with two or more dwelling units with occupants primarily permanent in nature) with single stair egress as long as the following conditions are met: (1) The building is no more than six stories above grade plane, (2) There are no more than four dwelling units on one floor, (3) The building is equipped with an automatic sprinkler system, and (4) Each unit has at least one window or other emergency exit provision. This bill is similar to one that passed in Tennessee in 2024.

[SB 243](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC0808?open_tab=sum) – Amend zoning regulations to allow taller buildings  
Sen. Ellie Boldman (D) (SUPPORT)

This bill prohibits local governments from outlawing multifamily or mixed-use developments up to six stories in commercial zones. Additional height makes housing projects more viable, enables denser, more cost-effective housing, and addresses affordability concerns. This also allows more flexibility in building configurations, permitting the very popular 5-over-1 building type. Without this bill, a 5-over-1 building in Billings is illegal unless it is in the downtown core.

[SB 266](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC1655?open_tab=sum) – Revise municipal zoning to allow for triplex and fourplex housing  
Sen. Jeremy Trebas (R) (SUPPORT)

This bill is a follow-up to last session’s bill (SB 323) to eliminate exclusionary zoning. This bill would prohibit zoning regulations on triplex and fourplex housing more stringent than zoning regulations for single-family residences. For Billings, with approximately 32,000 single family residences, this bill would allow for (though it wouldn’t result in) another 100,000 dwelling units within Billings without having to expand city boundaries and sprawl.

**WORKFORCE & EDUCATION**

[SB 93](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC0570?open_tab=sum) - Revise income taxes related to retired military members  
Sen. John Fuller (R) (SUPPORT)

This bill makes modifications to one we supported last session. Thanks to passage in 2023, current law allows exemption of the lesser of 50% retirement benefits or "Montana source wage income." However, it was limited to those who were residents before receiving benefits, or who moved after June 30, 2023, and limited to 5 consecutive years of exemption with the exemption expiring in 2033. This bill moves residency requirement to post-9/11, removes the 5-year limitation for claiming the credit, and eliminates the 2033 exemption expiration. The intent is to make Montana more attractive for retiring veterans.

[HB 357](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC1788?open_tab=sum) – Provide funding for middle school career and technical education  
Rep. Eric Tilleman (R) (SUPPORT)

This bill appropriates $100,000 from the general fund to the Office of Public Instruction for fiscal year 2027 for middle school career and technical education. The Superintendent of OPI will determine rules for distribution to approved middle school CTE programs with the intention to be used to enhance distributions of federal funding under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006. The appropriation is intended to be an ongoing distribution, part of the base for the next legislative session.

[HB 457](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC2106?open_tab=sum) – Revise best beginnings eligibility  
Jonathan Karlen (D) (SUPPORT)

This bill changes the eligibility requirements from 185% of the federal poverty level to 85% of the state median income. It also appropriates $17 million from the general fund for the purposes of funding the best beginnings childcare scholarship program which provides scholarships to qualifying low-income families to pay for childcare while they are working or going to school or training. This bill helps working families with childcare, benefiting our businesses by keeping people in the workforce.

Defense

**MEDICAID EXPANSION REAUTHORIZATION**

[HB 245](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC0953?open_tab=sum) - Revise MT HELP Act workforce development provisions and termination date  
Rep. Ed Buttrey (R) (SUPPORT)

This bill repeals the sunset date of June 30, 2025, at which point Medicaid expansion would have ended. The net effect of the repealer appears to make Medicaid expansion in Montana subject to the appropriation of the Legislature.

[SB 62](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC0624?open_tab=sum) - Provide for phaseout of Medicaid expansion program  
Sen. Carl Glimm (R) (OPPOSE) – Passed cmte 6-5

This bill requires the Dept. of Public Health and Human Services to wind down the MT Medicaid expansion program beginning September 1, 2025. As of July 2023, over 16,000 workers in Yellowstone County were enrolled in Medicaid expansion, many working for our small businesses like retail, restaurants, and childcare—needed industries that might not be able to afford employee healthcare plans. The Billings Chamber supported Medicaid expansion when it was first passed in 2015, reauthorized in 2019, and support it presently.

[HB 230](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC1217?open_tab=sum) - Generally revise Medicaid laws  
Rep. Mary Caferro (D) (MONITOR)

The proposed bill seeks to amend Montana's Medicaid laws by eliminating work requirements and premiums, while establishing a 12-month continuous eligibility for Medicaid coverage. It also mandates quarterly reporting on various metrics related to Medicaid client services and establishes a Medicaid Client Advisory Board to provide insights on program administration.

##### [SB 199](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC0584?open_tab=sum) - Revise the Medicaid expansion program Sen. Jeremy Trebas (R) (MONITOR)

The bill updates the Taxpayer Integrity Fee and community engagement requirements for program participants. Additionally, the community engagement requirements have been adjusted to allow for a broader range of activities that can count towards the 80 hours of required participation each month. Furthermore, the bill creates a contingent termination based on the acquisition of necessary approvals or waivers from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. If these approvals are not obtained, the act will terminate on June 30 of the year following the next regular legislative session after the Department of Public Health and Human Services certifies this lack of approval.

**TAX INCREMENT FINANCE**

[HB 19](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC0084?open_tab=sum) - Require public hearing before certain tax increment finance bonding  
Rep. Larry Brewster (R) (SUPPORT)

This bill requires a public hearing before pledging TIF revenue to the repayment of bonds. Generally, Billings hasn't required a public hearing, but the decision is always on the consent agenda, allowing for public comment to the elected body. This bill allows for more public input.

[SB 1](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC0082?open_tab=sum) – Revise definition of “blighted area”  
Sen. Greg Hertz (R) (SUPPORT)

This bill revises the statutory definition of "blighted area," a condition that must be established before an Urban Renewal District (URD) can be formed. The new definition more appropriately defines blighted areas with a focus on disrepair, deterioration, and endangerment. This bill helps ensure TIFs support a public good.

[SB 2](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC0081?open_tab=sum) – Revise treatment of tax increment upon expiration of tax increment financing provision  
Sen. Greg Hertz (R) (~~OPPOSE~~ MONITOR)

This bill would prohibit local governments from factoring the growth of property values within the TIF district into their overall property tax assessment once the district sunsets. This has no impact on Billings because of the mill levy cap in our Charter.

[SB 3](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC0083?open_tab=sum) – Require advisory committee for districts that use tax increment financing  
Sen. Jeremy Trebas (R) (SUPPORT)

This bill adds a requirement for TIF districts to have an advisory committee, appointed by the city council or county commissioners, to administer the TIF district and advise the local government. The advisory committee must also include (1) representative from any cities or towns, and (1) representative from any school districts with boundaries that overlap the TIF district. Billings already operates with TIF advisory committees and it will be easy to include representatives from the city, county, and school district to provide additional perspective from those entities. This bill adds oversight of TIFs.

**TOURISM**

[SB 90](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC0627?open_tab=sum) - Redistribute certain state tax revenue to primary residence property tax relief  
Sen. Carl Glimm (R) (OPPOSE)

The proposed bill seeks to provide property tax assistance for primary residences in Montana, funded by revenues from lodging and rental car taxes. Unfortunately, the bill ‘robs Peter to pay Paul’ re-directing funding that would have otherwise supported programs like Made in Montana, grants for small town tourism, and research at UM on tourism.

[HB 200](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC3553?open_tab=sum) – Provide for increase in total MEDIA act film tax credits  
Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe (R) (SUPPORT)

This bill increases the cap on the MEDIA Act film tax credit from $12 million per year to $350 million per year. The $350 million cap is expected to increase the amount of film production and spending in Montana and credits claimed. Originally passed in 2019 by Representative Wylie Galt, the tax credit was established at $10 million of first-come, first-served tax credits for qualifying media productions in Montana. That increase in the tax credit cap was at least partially responsible for the television series Yellowstone packing their things in Utah and moving all production to Montana.

**NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT**

[**HB 270**](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2ftctxu95ab.cc.rs6.net%2ftn.jsp%3ff%3d001EDI9WvPh7miDYuC9w_anSWnONfalqhVGTsjoKzc57Wku6xIhQVLEenYET7NcfLh2euETuBJd-jYHK4SkxjCoxItqTMvKeJMlmomY74zCKNjFn-YB52_KpH-y9_CaPzd_AE8388ry8CjinAM6u8NX-hZZJpiffXs6D4XlA-RV_01HIm7jgQNU_vldSG8eZ8aCigC1K8T1PqgDgfA_FdTVyw%3d%3d%26c%3dhagQ4Sqx4q0TpcHGWfsXEuph0DCbN_yqRfnjTtyNhsfj1epY-UtSDQ%3d%3d%26ch%3dfIhCIwWEKITB8ERPAR7Id1fxBHhLfp3AjMZPj21OJ49b15F8YsYrPg%3d%3d&c=E,1,Zqa9YoDotW_uvCvv6q2NXuoytz64hEN7oJFwote1tchxnuj73m2RBZv8Rd-u4I13ssehJFpeHgsw_f6N_9TqnaVW9tigbn9_CJCPpJ4-hNNV-L_GquU,&typo=1) - Revise remedies to MEPA

Rep. Katie Zolnikov (R)(SUPPORT)

This bill adds to existing remedy provisions to clarify that Courts cannot vacate permits for MEPA noncompliance unless the Court makes the required findings such as whether the party requesting the relief will suffer an irreparable harm, whether the relief is in the public interest, whether the relief will impact the local economy, and whether the relief is narrowly tailored to address the noncompliance. It also clarifies that remand to the department (currently implied but not specific) is an acceptable remedy for noncompliance. Lastly, it eliminates the need to seek a preliminary injunction at the beginning of a case if a vacatur is ultimately sought, avoiding duplicative arguments in the process.

[**HB 285**](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2ftctxu95ab.cc.rs6.net%2ftn.jsp%3ff%3d001EDI9WvPh7miDYuC9w_anSWnONfalqhVGTsjoKzc57Wku6xIhQVLEenYET7NcfLh2mUxzWCbU9R7GwVBstKyJ15F_nNe6E6ukB0R3aGs0Q4JqWYC9mgU8eMD1AjKL6U6p8ROqYLSLwygksIyXlP17cdl9_y7xN4sOQ8OctCheZ2SyvFsaImOYasjq7XTzRhowQ7rxLcCoAQeuYhOWoC9rQQ%3d%3d%26c%3dhagQ4Sqx4q0TpcHGWfsXEuph0DCbN_yqRfnjTtyNhsfj1epY-UtSDQ%3d%3d%26ch%3dfIhCIwWEKITB8ERPAR7Id1fxBHhLfp3AjMZPj21OJ49b15F8YsYrPg%3d%3d&c=E,1,9sAGHC6giV5dph6iK2CcfxxI19H27SVcs60gYyNtmih8Rnc0IxVoThIDbhjxEGagtViak4k3-zglf9pRz0-sSkOXwDHmnpyFMYEXyrka-jA,&typo=1) - Generally revise Montana environmental policy act

Rep. Brandon Ler (R) (SUPPORT)

This bill revises MEPA to add clarity, improve efficiency, and make it better suited for Montanans by reinforcing the purpose and intent of MEPA as an investigatory, procedural tool. It emphasizes that MEPA is not regulatory and not intended to be used to stall project permitting. The bill ensures a fair and predictable permitting process while maintaining public transparency.

[**HB 291**](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2ftctxu95ab.cc.rs6.net%2ftn.jsp%3ff%3d001EDI9WvPh7miDYuC9w_anSWnONfalqhVGTsjoKzc57Wku6xIhQVLEenYET7NcfLh2Oq_7cwjMWtYGM1mRorkjBDmaZg2maI4uG9d0Osz6GMmvO5Tj9CQMWEYs6XiOUEAoTp_3TP1usP039QhWrfS7V6Rnyfk12vtdFoDdX9mbfBPlRp0DHfgtlBgEc-Wg6UAvVRnJgvnr7WC-D58X0jCVnA%3d%3d%26c%3dhagQ4Sqx4q0TpcHGWfsXEuph0DCbN_yqRfnjTtyNhsfj1epY-UtSDQ%3d%3d%26ch%3dfIhCIwWEKITB8ERPAR7Id1fxBHhLfp3AjMZPj21OJ49b15F8YsYrPg%3d%3d&c=E,1,sWhZz5UxSAy8G9cPZ6SuLmGqb848kMJLzt2z_Z6Vtk7jib5O4t7SJL7A7ctAH7hnyDQOQOnMcIOSay0b4eQoVLocf67AeXQESSAIfl29sQ,,&typo=1) - Revise laws related to air quality

Rep. Greg Oblander (R) (SUPPORT)

This bill restores authority to the Legislature to determine when and if standards stricter than the federal Clean Air Act need to be imposed in the state. By retaining that authority, the Legislature removes it from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and local pollution control programs. Opponents suggested this bill would harm the state, ignoring [**the fact**](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2ftctxu95ab.cc.rs6.net%2ftn.jsp%3ff%3d001EDI9WvPh7miDYuC9w_anSWnONfalqhVGTsjoKzc57Wku6xIhQVLEenYET7NcfLh2wfNtog1-PUIeStzOcHSi0vFYf_rn0Zo_cp4tBpDhYaVDPSu21n487Bywo-eK1dI-0EwJ3Dp09DX9AL64FE8oJU5LXFejAk8oPZIr3Q78diN0IqHNez4n-Sd3OqMA2SRAQKhbaz7V8OU%3d%26c%3dhagQ4Sqx4q0TpcHGWfsXEuph0DCbN_yqRfnjTtyNhsfj1epY-UtSDQ%3d%3d%26ch%3dfIhCIwWEKITB8ERPAR7Id1fxBHhLfp3AjMZPj21OJ49b15F8YsYrPg%3d%3d&c=E,1,OEz3fuf3XcA6IRORihB9LUX7Et8uIxgsZhqLDvbXx9vsWpGx1wT6Fot489Qoum4KYDUpYYeNyQNig9gndOmYVEfC6m2SqsA_YOK8H97aidjZgWM,&typo=1) that the federal Clean Air Act has resulted in a 78% decline in air pollutants since the act was established. Montana is already well served by the regulations currently in place.

[**SB 221**](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2ftctxu95ab.cc.rs6.net%2ftn.jsp%3ff%3d001EDI9WvPh7miDYuC9w_anSWnONfalqhVGTsjoKzc57Wku6xIhQVLEenYET7NcfLh2eheqEvQWZnz2qIgrM4M3DlRr-9TWPJBLmxWB__7PJsr4Pf96cqMC_5VNWU5blH7LA3HrqW4flvmdb_XZhgIm3dynQqF6rlKctWkCN7Jt8bK7g39xHmOqYpIZkD14XkaRN8STuX6NZnY15IarqSAScOB7JhvMb1H9cWAGJvblXRmSjGGm85UuEIVPvHcg4hQO_vBoMcXM1JidLZh0CB2MGw%3d%3d%26c%3dhagQ4Sqx4q0TpcHGWfsXEuph0DCbN_yqRfnjTtyNhsfj1epY-UtSDQ%3d%3d%26ch%3dfIhCIwWEKITB8ERPAR7Id1fxBHhLfp3AjMZPj21OJ49b15F8YsYrPg%3d%3d&c=E,1,hMrql9DQ1w_MFcg0Mz0cpfo6J9AJIkY9YUvDKDSYYDytF1h8qhSySho02os8YeppQm1PKyEwmG6bgKSxkk1BMRholN9e6i5c-8Mi6LwpnFv2XGzkE4PQtDB496Nj&typo=1) - Generally revise the Montana environmental policy act

Sen. Wylie Galt (R) (SUPPORT)

This bill provides direction and clear statutory sideboards to include a greenhouse gas assessment under MEPA, adhering to the Court's Held decision. The bill charges DEQ with developing a guidance document to determine when a GHG assessment may be necessary, including methodologies for completing a GHG assessment. While it is not in the bill, but germane to the methodologies consideration, we would raise additional caution that no entertainment be given to the pseudoscientific social cost of greenhouse gas (SC-GHG) calculations, that are, "crucially flawed" and, "close to useless as tools for policy analysis," [**according to the MIT Economist**](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2ftctxu95ab.cc.rs6.net%2ftn.jsp%3ff%3d001EDI9WvPh7miDYuC9w_anSWnONfalqhVGTsjoKzc57Wku6xIhQVLEenYET7NcfLh2Ojg9MFaSpfMBa1vwkaTBmKmlS4QQmx2paKNoBe8wcp-HeRaxWQSHddRjFvYTyldrAVz2KKRyOrJcSPF7FLqWfNccBjylQjy4kMHhKQoEgvtfgDKR6hqY7EqXwhHo4oEkbRz9HIZLPozFXtG0HmPB-ToTd3cW2ZGC%26c%3dhagQ4Sqx4q0TpcHGWfsXEuph0DCbN_yqRfnjTtyNhsfj1epY-UtSDQ%3d%3d%26ch%3dfIhCIwWEKITB8ERPAR7Id1fxBHhLfp3AjMZPj21OJ49b15F8YsYrPg%3d%3d&c=E,1,x7-bKPKUbobztqvmHsBPvH8qxGkIBxB6Ey63LQ013fShxgd97ATxxLHMAOKrEwJWCnMGdWZwILSuPonw1Yu_ayWKAGFcgIeKmp70I7ZTBB3Fw87aDIbVUriG&typo=1), Dr. Robert S. Pindyk.

SB 283 – Generally revise laws relating to wind generation facilities  
Sen. Bob Phalen (R) (OPPOSE)

This bill would limit wind turbine towers to 350 ft in height, measured from the ground to the rotor hub.

[SB 294](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC0669?open_tab=sum) – Requiring public utilities to report a plan for 100% renewables  
Sen. Andrea Olsen (D) (OPPOSE)

This bill would require utilities to duplicate reporting to the legislature for reporting they are already doing to the Montana Public Service Commission. Our state’s largest utility already has a Net Zero plan, making this requirement unnecessary.

[HB 120](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC0222?open_tab=sum) – Revise commercial property assessed clean energy laws  
Rep. Julie Darling (R) (SUPPORT)

This bill provides a definition of “multifamily housing facility” that is specific to the commercial property-assessed capital enhancements program (C-PACE). The current definition binds C-PACE multifamily eligibility to buildings with four or more units and one or more elevators, restricting eligibility for medium-density multifamily housing structures with only two stories, not requiring elevators. This would make it easier for C-PACE to finance improvements to medium-density housing structures.

**PROPERTY TAX RELIEF**

[HB 231](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC0173?open_tab=sum) – Revise property tax rates for certain properties  
Rep. Llew Jones (R) (OPPOSE)

The bill changes the default tax rate on residential property from 1.35% to 1.9%, but creates a preferential tax rate for primary homes and long-term rentals, and most commercial property while holding class 4 improvements on agricultural land at the current rate of 1.35%. The bill indexes the tax tiers to the median residential and commercial property value each reappraisal cycle. The amendment lowers the tax rate on qualifying homes and long-term rental property value under half the statewide median residential value to 0.9%. The 1.9% rate applies to property over three-and-a-half times the median. The 1.1% rate applies to the qualifying class 4 residential property between one-half (1/2) the median and three-and-a-half (3.5) times the median.

[**HB 326**](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC1485?open_tab=sum) – Establish a tax on electrical energy not produced by coal to match coal severance tax rate  
Rep. Gary Parry (R) (OPPOSE)

This bill creates a new tax, assessed on electrical energy production in the state. Equal to 10% of the gross sale price of electricity, measured at the place of production. Electrical generation sourced from coal is exempt from the tax.

[HB 389](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC1707?open_tab=sum) – Provide for setbacks for wind turbine generators  
Rep. Brandon Ler (R) (OPPOSE)

This bill establishes tiered setbacks for wind turbine generators, prohibiting wind turbines from being constructed 1,250 ft from another property with a wind turbine agreement, 3,000 ft from public roads and highways, or 7,920 ft from another property that doesn’t have a wind turbine agreement. According to opponents, this bill would largely kill new wind generation in Montana, running counter to our all-of-the-above approach to energy generation in Montana.

**QUALITY OF LIFE**

[**HB 313**](https://bills.legmt.gov/#/laws/bill/2/LC1551?open_tab=sum) – Establish a grant program for aquatic recreational facilities  
Rep. Paul Tuss (D) (SUPPORT)

This bill transfers $5 million from the general fund to a state special revenue account administered by the Dept. of Commerce to accept grant applications from communities seeking to build public swimming pool infrastructure. The grant would fund $5 for each local matching dollar, up to $500,000. The DOC is limited to granting $1,000,000 per county, meaning Yellowstone County could potentially receive two grants from this program.