

1 SENATE BILL NO. 541

2 INTRODUCED BY A. OLSEN, J. KASSMIER

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4 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT RELATING TO THE PROTECTION OF MONTANA'S
5 POLLINATORS; CREATING A POLLINATOR HEALTH TASK FORCE; ESTABLISHING REPORTING
6 REQUIREMENTS; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AND PROVIDING EFFECTIVE DATES AND A
7 TERMINATION DATE."

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9 WHEREAS, the Legislature finds that more than 75% of the world's flowering plants and about 35% of
10 the world's food crops depend on pollinators to reproduce; and

11 WHEREAS, honeybees, wild bees, and other pollinators are responsible for the production of tree
12 fruits, small fruits, alfalfa seed, and other crops, contributing an estimated \$34 billion in economic value to the
13 United States annually; and

14 WHEREAS, beyond agriculture, pollinators are keystone species in the terrestrial ecosystems of
15 Montana, with fruit and seeds derived from insect pollination providing a major part of the diet of numerous
16 birds and mammal species; and

17 WHEREAS, the state has experienced pollinator habitat loss through property conversion,
18 fragmentation, and degradation of land, and with the state's population continuing to grow at a fast pace, the
19 additional loss of habitat is a significant concern; and

20 WHEREAS, the Legislature intends by this act to initiate a concerted effort to protect and expand the
21 habitat on which pollinators depend by coordinating with other state agencies and local governments in
22 promoting practices to ensure sustainable, healthy populations of managed and wild pollinators.

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24 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

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26 NEW SECTION. **Section 1. Pollinator health task force -- membership.** (1) The department of
27 agriculture shall establish and preside over a pollinator health task force that is composed of 14 members. The
28 department of agriculture shall appoint the members of the task force, which must include representatives from

each of the following interests, organizations, and state agencies:

- (a) one representative of the department of agriculture;
- (b) one representative of the department of natural resources and conservation;
- (c) one representative of the department of fish, wildlife, and parks;
- (d) one representative of the tree fruit industry;
- (e) one representative of the seed industry;
- (f) one representative of the berry industry;
- (g) one representative of another agricultural industry that is dependent on pollinators;
- (h) an expert in managed and wild pollinator health from Montana state university;
- (i) one representative of pesticide distributors and applicators;
- (j) one representative of conservation organizations;
- (k) one representative of organizations representing beekeepers or apiarists;
- (l) two representatives of Montana Indian tribes; and
- (m) one youth representative from an organization that encourages students to engage in

agricultural education.

(2) (a) A member of the task force who is a full-time salaried officer or employee of the state or of a political subdivision of the state may not be compensated for service as a member except when performing task force duties outside of regular working hours or during hours charged against leave time, but the member is entitled to reimbursement for travel expenses as provided in 2-18-501 through 2-18-503.

(b) A member of the task force who is not a full-time salaried officer or employee of the state or of a political subdivision of the state is entitled to be paid \$50 for each day in which the member is engaged in the performance of duties under this section. The member may also be reimbursed for travel expenses, as provided for in 2-18-501 through 2-18-503, incurred while performing task force duties.

(3) (a) A majority of the members of the task force constitutes a quorum.

(b) The action of a majority of a quorum constitutes an action of the task force.

NEW SECTION. Section 2. Task force duties -- reporting requirement. (1) The task force shall build on existing managed and wild pollinator habitat plans at the national and state level to develop a state

1 pollinator health strategy that includes but is not limited to:

2 (a) a research action plan to focus state efforts on understanding, preventing, and recovering from
3 managed and wild pollinator losses;

4 (b) a plan to expand and coordinate public education programs outlining steps that individuals and
5 businesses can take to help address the loss of managed and wild pollinators;

6 (c) a plan to expand research on and education related to varroa mites and other pests and
7 diseases that affect bees;

8 (d) recommendations for developing public and private partnerships to encourage managed and
9 wild pollinator protection and to increase the quality and amount of habitat and forage for managed and wild
10 pollinators;

11 (e) specific targets and plans that state agencies should adopt to enhance managed and wild
12 pollinator habitat on their managed lands and facilities;

13 (f) recommendations for promoting seed banks and native plants beneficial to managed and wild
14 pollinators;

15 (g) recommendations for developing a plan to improve communication between beekeepers,
16 landowners, and pesticide applicators, including a draft policy for the director of the department of agriculture to
17 consider that would allow the release of contact information for registered apiarists when requested by a
18 landowner or pesticide applicator in order to protect the apiary when possible; and

19 (h) recommendations for legislative, administrative, or budgetary actions necessary to implement
20 the strategy.

21 (2) The department of agriculture shall provide a report on the findings and recommendations of
22 the task force, including all of the items listed in subsections (1)(a) through (1)(h), to the 70th legislature.
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24 NEW SECTION. **Section 3. Appropriation.** There is appropriated \$50,000 from the general fund to
25 the department of agriculture for the biennium beginning July 1, 2025, to pay for the costs associated with the
26 task force duties prescribed in [section 2].
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28 NEW SECTION. **Section 4. Notification to tribal governments.** The secretary of state shall send a

1 copy of [this act] to each federally recognized tribal government in Montana.

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3 NEW SECTION. **Section 5. Effective dates.** (1) Except as provided in subsection (2), [this act] is

4 effective on passage and approval.

5 (2) [Section 3] is effective July 1, 2025.

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7 NEW SECTION. **Section 6. Termination.** [This act] terminates December 31, 2026.

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