

WEEKLY REPORT
Missoula
Week Ending 4-10-2021

WEEK IN REVIEW

HB436: Generally revise firearms laws

Position: OPPOSE

Status: TABLED in Senate Judiciary. Working with other stakeholders, we were able to secure enough Republican votes. This bill would have eliminated the ability of local governments to regulate the carrying of unpermitted, concealed weapons in government buildings and was of deep concern to both Missoula and Bozeman. We may need to work to ensure that this is not an attempt to 'blast' this to the floor or be reconsidered.

SB388: Provide for infrastructure through tax increment financing

Position: OPPOSE

Status: AMENDED version PASSED Senate and set for House Tax hearing 4/13.

This bill initially was tabled in Senate Local Government on March 31, but brought back the next day for reconsideration. The sponsor included amendments removing several of the critical concerns with the bill: the inclusion of university mills and any new mill levies. It also improved the definition of infrastructure. We believe the current version now only applied to future TEDDs, but we do remain concerned, along with the league, that this is a "foot in the door" effort to eventually further limit or prohibit the use of TIF/TEDD and will continue to work to oppose.

HB121: Require elected official approval of local health board and officer actions.

Position: SUPPORT/MONITOR

Status: Amended version transmitted to the governor. Of the many bills attempting to limit the ability of local health boards, this is the one we've determined we can work with and hopefully help support and move forward. We've been generally successful in continuing to move this one forward with amendments local government can support. We believe that is still the case.

SB385: Revise special district laws and provide time limit on property tax levies

Position: OPPOSE (Original version)

Status : PASSED Senate. Hearing Set in House Tax for 4/13.

We are continuing to try to work with the sponsor for the ability to "grandfather" in certain districts, including two in Missoula and one in Bozeman that, if this bill passes as is, would be forced to terminate. In the case of Missoula, they would have to terminate in less than two years. Discussions with the league will continue this week. The bill was referred to House Tax and a hearing is set for Tuesday, April 13 in the same committee as SB388.

SB358: Repeal numeric nutrient standards for water quality

Position: SUPPORT

Status: Amended version passed Senate on Second reading.

This bill, initially tabled in committee, was brought back to due to the work of the league and others in order to address the ability of local governments to meet nutrient standards and balance development needs. In short, the bill eliminates unrealistic nutrient standard statutes and, instead, requires the state to adopt rules for creation of consistent, realistic standards. A lot of work went into this bill, and the result is expected to be a much better system for protecting watersheds while also allowing for reasonable development and management of resources.

STATUS OF OTHER ISSUES AND BILLS

HB427: Provide for youth health protection

Position: OPPOSE

Status: We continue to await floor action on the Senate. This bill passed Senate Judiciary on a party line vote on March 18 but has NOT been brought to the full floor for a vote yet.

HB112; Require interscholastic athletes to participate under sex assigned at birth.

Position: OPPOSE

Status: Passed third-reading in the Senate with amendments and returned to the House to concur

SB215: Establish the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

Position: OPPOSE

Status: Passed House on third-reading 4-1 and returned to the Senate.

HB504: Generally revise firearms laws.

Position: OPPOSE

Status: Passed Senate Judiciary on 3/19 on a party line vote. Awaiting Senate floor vote.

This WEEK:

No new bills of concern. We will be assisting the league as needed to address concerns with SB385 and SB388 in House Tax on Tuesday and continue efforts to see if we can get a successful pushback from moderate Republicans on HB504 and HB427.

We also continue to closely monitor the status of legislation related to ARPA funding, specifically HB632. That bill is in Senate and Finance and Claims and still includes Section 26, which reduces most local share of ARPA funding by 20 percent if the local government or any of

its “agents” has stricter COVID rules than the state. A lot of press about this recently and a lot of questions remain about the potential impacts of this and whether it will be enforceable.

We expect to get further information in the coming days about the legislative calendar. Because the ARPA funding actually won’t be available for months, the latest word from Senate and House leaders is an expectation to “wrap up” the 2021 regular session by the end of the third week (next week) and possibly “reserve” some days to come back this summer when the federal government releases the ARPA funding. What is to be determined is whether the Legislature adjourns sine die and calls a special session, or simply takes a recess and comes back. The hope of most, including us, is that they sine die and come back when necessary for a brief, special session.