

MISSOULA LOBBYING REPORT
JAN. 20, 2017
(for first three weeks)
John MacDonald, Registered Lobbyist

The 65th Legislative Session convened Monday, January 2nd.
Political Make Up: 59 Republicans and 39 Democrats in the House. 32 Republicans and 18 Democrats in the Senate.
Leadership: Sen. Scott Sales (R., Bozeman) is the Senate President. Rep. Austin Knudsen (R., Culbertson) is the Speaker of the House. The Majority and Minority Leaders are stressing cooperation and collaboration, hopefully to avoid the conflicts which occurred in the 2015 Session.
There are about 40 new Legislators.

Due to declining revenues, there is and will be a budget shortfall at the current spending level. The ending fund balance at the end of the current fiscal year (2017) was expected to be about \$300 million at the end of the 2015 Session. That balance is now predicted to be less than \$80 million. The Governor's budget includes spending cuts, transfers from several revenue accounts and specific tax increases. The Republican majority has reduced the fiscal year 2017 budget amounts by an additional 5% (about \$120 million) as the base starting point for budget presentations.

The following is a recap of direct lobbying activities for the first three weeks of the session.:

HB94: Generally revise public safety officer standards/training council laws.

Position: Oppose without amendments. Support with.

MacDonald and other interested parties met with the sponsor in advance of the hearing for discussions about the bill. We were assured that there was no intent to prohibit private companies from taking on misdemeanor parole and probation, despite language in the bill doing that. The sponsor made it clear at the hearing that amendments were in the works to correct this. MacDonald is working with Community Corrections, the sponsor and others to ensure changes are made so existing privately provided services can continue. No immediate word on amendments, but the committee has delayed executive action until it gets word from the sponsor.

Status: Pending. Awaiting amendments and executive action in House Judiciary.

HB134: Revise school funding related to facilities

Position: Oppose.

No hearing scheduled yet. MacDonald is working closely with the League and other municipalities to oppose this bill. This has included outreach to allies such as MACO.

Status: Pending

SB34: Amend laws related to an urban renewal agency board of commissioners

Position: Oppose without amendments. Withdraw opposition with friendly amendment.

MacDonald testified along with representatives from Great Falls and Kalispell at the Senate Local Government hearing and urged a 'no' vote due to the fact that this would mandate memberships on an already small board. The league worked up an amendment to simply ADD two more positions to these boards to accommodate appointees representing the county and school district. However, that amendment FAILED, which we did not expect given conversations with committee members. The committee then passed the original bill. We are working with the league to discuss next steps.

Status: Passed Senate Local Government. Awaiting floor action.

SB27: Amend TIF laws related to public hearings and reporting.

Position: Oppose without amendments. Support with.

MacDonald testified along with representatives from other municipalities and the league at the Senate Local Government. This bill ran into pretty strong opposition and the sponsor agreed to work with the communities and the league on some amendments. We provided information about reporting requirements and reports that are already in place. MacDonald has had several visits with Thomas since the committee hearing, and the league has worked out a final batch of amendments that would appease both the sponsor and the local governments.

Status: Awaiting approval of amendments and a vote in Senate Local Government.

HB34: Increase net metering cap for certain customer generators

Position: Support.

MacDonald met with the sponsor, who was not particularly interested in the city's support, due to his own agenda regarding this bill, which differed from Missoula's. Although prepared to support due to the positive impacts it could have on municipalities, we honored the sponsor's request and stayed out of the room.

Status: Awaiting executive action in House Energy, Technology and Federal Relations

HB181: Establish requirements for police dogs.

Position: Oppose without amendments.

MacDonald testified on behalf of the Missoula police in opposition to this bill. Joined by about a half-dozen others, including law enforcement, county attorneys. Opponents have offered amendments that would make the bill palatable and have shared those with the chiefs of police, including Mike Brady. MacDonald will allow the chiefs to take the lead on this.

Status: Awaiting amendments and executive action in House Judiciary

HB194: Prohibit local restrictions on electronic devices while driving.

Position: Oppose

MacDonald testified along with representatives from other communities, law enforcement and the League in opposition to this bill, citing the need to respect local control and the fact that these are public health issues. The sponsor seems to have found a sympathetic committee in House Judiciary, although we heard rumors after the

hearing that the sponsor was getting significant pushback from his constituents, as well as harsh criticism in the press, and may move to table his bill.

Status: Awaiting executive action in House Judiciary, and possible tabling by the sponsor.

LC2325: Local option infrastructure investment and property tax relief act

Position: Support

This bill is still in draft, but we are already in talks with supporters as well as known opponents to lay the ground work for this to hopefully move forward. This included direct lobbying by MacDonald of several legislators.

Status: Bill not yet introduced.

HB250: Require county and school district approval for adoption of TIF provision

Position: Oppose.

We've known about this bill for sometime and MacDonald had several early talks with the sponsor letting him know about potential concerns. The League is going to take the lead on this one and we will have a strategy after a conference call on January 20.

Status: Bill scheduled for hearing Jan. 24th , House Local Government.

ADDITIONAL DIRECT LOBBYING:

Along with the league and others, we are active participants in the Montana Infrastructure Coalition, helping raise awareness of infrastructure needs and building support among legislative members. Efforts include direct contact with more than a dozen lawmakers in the House and Senate.