

WEEKLY REPORT
Missoula
Week Ending 2-12-2021

WEEK IN REVIEW

HB259: Revise property and zone laws

Position: OPPOSE

Passed Committee 9-8 on 2/9

The bill is expected to get second-reading on the House floor the week of 2/15. Despite confirmations from three Republican members of House Local Government that they would oppose the bill, one of the strongest GOP opponents flipped from a solid no to a “reluctant yes” the day of the hearing. We are not whipping this bill on the House floor and will concentrate our efforts in Senate Local Government.

HB327: Provide for default definitions for covenants limiting the use of real property

Position: OPPOSE

Bill Tabled in House Judiciary 2/12

This bill popped up rather unexpectedly and had numerous concerns for Bozeman and Missoula regarding the ability of certain businesses to be operated from private homes, including licensed daycare. We were not able to attend the hearing, but worked this in the halls following.

SB127: Revise laws on the selection of municipal court judges

Position: OPPOSE/AMEND

Missoula and Bozeman have both expressed concerns with the fiscal impacts of requiring all judges – even part-time judges – to be elected rather than appointed. This bill sailed through the Senate earlier and our initial efforts to get amendments to allow “special masters” similar to District Court, were rebuffed by the sponsor. Now in House Judiciary, we have proposed the amendments again. We will continue to monitor. This bill has strong support as is.

HB319: Revise dates for special purpose elections.

Position: SUPPORT

Passed House State Admin 19-0 on 2/11

Proposed by City of Bozeman to allow certain special purpose elections be held on general election dates.

HB243: Generally revise laws related to law enforcement.

Position: Missoula SUPPORT MONITOR for BOZEMAN

Passed Third Reading Unanimously on 2/10

This bill was requested by the City of Missoula Police Chief to address the use of reserve officers in a limited capacity as court security officers

SB77: Revise allowable special district assessment methods.

Position: OPPOSE AS IS. SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

Hearing Held 1/15. League is taking the lead in the committee. Executive action planned for Friday, 1-29, was postponed until next week. Kelly Lynch has an agreement with the sponsor that will address the concerns communities and the League have. We will assist the league in securing votes for the amended version of the bill.

SB10: Providing for circuit breaker income tax credit for property taxes paid.

Position SUPPORT

Tabled in Committee 2/12

We supported this bill as a sensible way to provide tax relief to lower-income and retired residents when their property taxes hit a certain level of their income. Heard in Senate Tax, we recognized that this bill was likely not going to pass.

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

Position: SUPPORT as AMENDED

Passed House Local with amendments and now REFERRED to House Business and Labor
One of the measures intended to put controls on the abilities of local health boards. Considered the least “offensive” of a series of these bills, local government interest worked to get this one amended to a place where it could be the one we could live it.

NEW BILLS OF CONCERN OR INTEREST:

LC3238: Generally revise civil liability laws related to state and local government

Position: NEEDS REVIEW when language is available.

Bill is in draft. We have added to our watch list and will advise when there is language to review.

LC1327: Revise qualified immunity laws

Position: NEEDS REVIEW when language is available.

Bill is still in draft edit. We have added to our watch list and will advise when there is language to review.

LC1539: Authorize municipalities to operate broadband utilities

Position: SUPPORT For Missoula: REVIEW

Rep. Kelly Kortum of Bozeman is proposing this bill and seeking support from local governments. Bozeman is working with him to provide support and testimony.

LC3168: Repeal local option gas tax

Position: RECOMMEND OPPOSE

This bill would repeal the ability of county governments to adopt by resolution a local option fuel tax. While this is a county tax provision, we may want to join MACO if they oppose.

HB359 (LC2515): Revise net metering laws.

Position: OPPOSE

First listed this as a "Review" last week. Both Missoula and Bozeman recommend oppose, but the cities are not the best advocates. We will discuss with our allies and delegation members, but are not likely to provide testimony.

HB176: Close late voter registration on noon the day before the election

POSITION: NEEDS REVIEW

Bozeman city attorney has flagged this as a Level 3 priority 'Oppose.' Missoula does not have it flagged. Should review and determine whether we need to oppose.

STATUS OF OTHER BILLS OF INTEREST

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

Position: OPPOSE

Bill has passed the House and been introduced in the Senate, but no hearing date set as of yet. A fiscal note has been requested.

HB21: Authorize funding for the multifamily coal trust home loan program.

Position: SUPPORT.

Passed Third Reading 57-42. Hearing in Senate Finance and Claims held 2/2. Awaiting Executive action.

Need to continue to monitor and help out as needed if there are any signs of weakening support.

STATUS OF PRIORITY ISSUES:

AFFORDABLE HOUSING: Our strategy has turned largely defensive as we continue efforts to prevent legislation that would limit affordable housing options. We were successful in defeating Rep. Tenebaum's HB134 . Rep. Vinton's HB259, as noted above, unfortunately got out of House Local Government on a 9-8 vote after one of our solid "No" Republican votes became a last-minute "reluctant yes." We are reorganizing for our efforts to defeat this on the Senate side. Other legislation good for affordable housing, specifically HB21, continues to move forward. Our local option proposal, LC2411, ties directly to affordable housing as well as is advancing. (See below).

LOCAL OPTION: LC2411 Spoke with Sen. Pope on 2/4 and his bill has been sent to legislative services for legal review and editing. Sen. Pope intends to drop the bill the week of 2/15 with expected hearing date sometime the following week. MacDonald and Rossi have another strategy call set with the senator for 2/16 to discuss efforts and arguments and will be circling back with allies following that.

PROPERTY TAX RELIEF: LC2411 continues to be our major push for property tax relief at this point. We continue to watch and be concerned about bill drafts proposing additional shifts of property tax burden on to residential taxpayers.