

City of Missoula Lobbyist Report for Week of Feb 21

Committees and Bills Testified:

No Committees this week. Floor sessions and executive action only.

As of last week Thursday, we are midway through the session and this week's report will focus on some of the work that lies ahead for the second half.

The Budget: The House Appropriations will continue meeting this week to hammer out details of House Bill 2. Republican leadership has made some additional cuts to the governor's recommended budget and tensions continue to run high. Nearly all human service-related budgets have been slashed under the GOP proposals, and there remain a number of bills that would impose across-the-board cuts on top of both the governor's proposed cuts AND the GOPs other cuts. We continue to monitor, but this is and will remain fluid for some time.

Entitlements: Three entitlement bills, HB26, HB56 and HB495 remain in play and all are in House Appropriations with no executive action yet taken. Missoula has generally supported HB26 because it leaves the current formula in place, although it makes short-term adjustments to recognize the immediate economic situation the state is in. HB56 would entirely replace the current formula and the city and others opposed it in committee. While the city remained "undecided" on HB495, it also makes some fairly substantial changes to the existing formula. The Montana League of Cities and Towns continues to work on this issue closely and we will provide assistance as needed.

Land Use: Rep. Esp's HB542 has made it out of the House and we are awaiting a Senate hearing. We will continue to oppose because of the harmful effects of changes to the "ag impact" language in this bill. Esp has agreed to remove other language in the bill, including the awarding of attorneys fees, and is hopeful that we can come up with something with which to work. However, as long as the ag impact language is changed and only allows governments to consider impacts on "surrounding agricultural operations," the city will continue to oppose.

Separately, HB494, the "subdivision for rent or lease" bill, passed the full House but has strong opposition from Missoula Rep. Michele Reinhart, and continues to lack support from significant stakeholders, including Missoula County and the Montana Planners. We wanted to get this through, however, in order to continue discussions, and this was the only vehicle available other than one proposed by the builders which went way too far. We will continue to assist on this bill, but the city's main concern is ensuring that language exempting zoned properties stays

in the bill, and we may not want to wade into the other issues, which are of far more concern to counties.

Anti-Discrimination Bill: Rep. Hansen's HB516 passed the House by a wide margin and will likely be scheduled before Senate Judiciary. I have strong hope that with the right approach, we may be able to kill this in committee on the Senate side. I will continue to work closely with other stakeholders on this bill.

By Tuesday, I will provide a spreadsheet showing the city's position on the major bills we've been tracking and where they all stand now.