

It was a busy week at the Legislature for the Association. Although the session up to this point had been a relatively quiet one overall with relatively few bills being introduced and considered as opposed to previous years, as expected the pace of the session started to pick up as we get closer to the bill transmittal date. The transmittal date is the date by which a bill that originated in the house must be passed out of the house (and vice versa) or the bill is dead.

This week the Association addressed several bills important to the Association's interests. These being:

1. FUNDING FOR THE LIVESTOCK LOSS BOARD:

Our Bill, SB 73, to fund the livestock loss board for another six years passed out of the Senate this week. The bill passed third reading (final vote) on the Senate floor by a vote of 48-2. The Bill has, therefore, met the transmittal deadline referenced above. The bill has been referred to the house agriculture committee and could be heard as soon as the end of this week. The bill is moving nicely through the Legislature, and all indications are that the Governor will sign the bill.

2. GRIZZLY BEAR DELISTING RESOLUTION

The MWGA is advancing a joint resolution, which such resolution expresses the sentiment of the Montana legislature that Montana's grizzly bear population in its entirety should be congressionally delisted in the same manner as was Montana's wolf population.

The resolution was dropped into the hopper today, and will be heard in House Natural Resources likely Wednesday.

3. SB206 -- HSUSA legislation to allow law enforcement/counties to seize animals

This is repeat legislation from the 2015 session, which MWGA opposed. This bill, which is sponsored by the humane society of the United States, would allow for animals that have been seized by law enforcement under suspicion of animal cruelty to be sold BEFORE the owner is convicted. MWGA believes that such action would be a violation of due process, private property rights, and has serious potential consequences for Montana's livestock industry.

MWGA once again opposed this bill when it was before the Senate Judiciary Committee this past week.

4. SB 155 – this bill would make seed laws consistent with fertilizer laws in Montana.

At present, only state government can regulate fertilizer use and application in Montana. This bill, if passed, would also make the state the sole entity to regulate seeds in Montana. This bill is designed to foreclose the growing interest of some county governments to regulate perceived GMOs

This bill does not touch regulation of cannabis.

This bill passed out of the senate ag committee on a 7-4 vote; and is awaiting action in the full senate.

5. HB 419 – wild bison

The House Agriculture Committee considered HB 419 this week, which is quite possibly the worst bill of the entire session. This bill would allow wild bison to be transferred or sold without the need for obtaining a brucellosis free certificate.

The bill was strongly supported by the Tribes. However, the committee darn near just killed the bill on the day of the hearing. I suspect the bill will die forthwith.

Monday February 20 – Legislative Day 37 -

Senate Business, Labor, and Economic Affairs – Room 422, 9am

SB167 – Generally revise laws pertaining to insurance offenses (Chas Vincent)

SB221 – Create presumption for insurance accidents caused by construction professionals (Steve Fitzpatrick) – Hearing Cancelled

SB222 – Revise insurance laws relating to annuity surrender fees (Steve Fitzpatrick)

SB223 – Revise insurance laws (Steve Fitzpatrick) – Hearing Cancelled

SB245 – Generally revise Montana captive insurance laws (Daniel Salomon)

Senate Conference – Room 405, 11:30am

HB146 – Revising temporary roadblock laws (Daniel Zolnikov)

Senate Education and Cultural Resources – Room 422, 3pm

SB242 – Encourage high schools to administer civics test (Sue Malek)

SR34 – Confirm Governor's appointees to the Historical Society Board of Trustees (Daniel Salomon)

Senate Judiciary – Room 303, 8am

SB282 – Revise abortion laws concerning viable fetus (Albert Olszewski)

SB286 – Revise laws regarding contractual right to attorney fees (Frederick Moore)

SB288 – Referendum to revise who pays for litigation costs (Edward Buttrey)

SB293 – Revise interest payments in civil cases (Cary Smith)

Senate Local Government – Room 405, 3pm

SB248 – Revise laws regarding exempt wells and family transfer parcels (Mark Blasdel)

SB251 – Generally revise laws related to short term rental facilities (Tom Facey)

SB266 – Revise subdivision approval time extensions (Jill Cohenour)

SB269 – Require determination of sufficient information in subdivision application (Mary Caferro)

Senate Natural Resources – Room 303, 3pm

SB281 – Revise use of fire suppression account funds (Chas Vincent)

SB284 – Generally revise laws related to sage grouse (Mike Lang)

SR20 – Confirm Governor appointee for Director, Dept. of Nat. Resources and Conservation (Chas Vincent)

SR21 – Confirm Governor appointee for Director of Dept. of Environmental Quality (Chas Vincent)

Senate Public Health, Welfare and Safety – Room 317, 3pm

SB271 – Revise laws related to the closure of the Montana Developmental Center (Fred Thomas)

SB283 – Revise the Montana rural physician incentive program (Albert Olszewski)

SR38 – Confirm Governor’s appointees to Board of Assistance (David Howard)
HB95 – increasing access to behavioral health care (Gordon Pierson) – Hearing Canceled
HB173 – Provide deadline for treatment plans and permanency hearings (Kimberly Dudik) – Hearing Canceled
HB195 – Revise laws related to pharmacies and prescription drugs (Kenneth Holmlund) – Hearing Canceled

Senate State Administration – Room 335, 3pm

SB240 – Revise laws related to legislator healthcare benefits (Edward Buttrey)
SB256 – Revise school district election laws (Dee Brown)
SB263 – Revise laws on public retirement system investments (Dee Brown)
SB267 – Move the Firefighter Memorial from Laurel, MT to Helena, MT (Jill Cohenour)
SB297 – Generally revise laws related to voters in school districts elections (Jedediah Hinkle)

House Appropriations – Room 102, 3pm

HB44 – Generally revise laws related to district court judge numbers (Jeff Essmann)

House Business and Labor – Room 172, 8:30am

HB490 – Exempt certain sports coaches from unemployment, workers’ comp exemption (Dave Fern)
HB500 – Generally revise public accountant laws (Adam Hertz)
HB506 – Allow certain card transaction fees (Jeremy Trebas)
HB508 – Revise the alcoholic beverage laws regarding appeals (Tom Welch)

House Education – Room 137, 3pm

HB418 – Revise funding for career and vocational/technical education (Kelly McCarthy)
HB421 – Ensure fire service training fees are deposited consistent with higher ed funds (Randy Brodehl)

House Energy, Technology, and Federal Relations – Room 472, 3pm

HB475 – Requiring certain utilities to file general rate cases (Tom Woods)
HB486 – Prohibit pipelines from crossing under streams and lakes (George Kipp)

House Human Services – Room 152, 3pm

SB129 – Require insurance coverage of teledentistry (Mary Caferro)
HB17 – Increase HCBS waiver slots and assisted living reimbursement rates (Ron Ehli)
HB361 – Revise SNAP eligibility (Tom Burnett)
HB409 – Restrict opioid prescriptions (Zach Brown)

House Judiciary – Room 137, 8am

HB441 – Generally revise human trafficking laws (Dennis Lenz)
HB467 – Revise standards of evidence in child abuse and neglect cases (Jeremy Trebas)
HB468 – Generally revise child abuse and neglect laws (Jeremy Trebas)
HB482 – Revise incest laws (Jennifer Eck)

House Natural Resources – Room 172, 3pm

HB414 – Provide for enhancement of stream access in MDT construction projects (Zach Brown) – Bill Withdrawn
HB481 – Authorize local government to take action on wildfires (Bob Brown)
HB502 – Clarify recreational prospecting exemption (Jean Price)

HJ9 – Resolution supporting the release of certain wilderness study areas (Kerry White)

House Transportation – Room 455, 3pm

HB459 – revise local government authority of certain speed limits (Willis Curdy)

HB471 – Exceed speed limit when passing zone (Kelly Flynn)

HB484 – Revise motor vehicle fee for state parks, facilities, and fishing access (Virginia Court)

HB485 – Revise drivers license laws related to veterans (Theresa Manzella)

Tuesday - February 21 – Legislative Day 38 – U.S. Senator Daines Address – House Chamber – 1pm

Senate Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation – Room 335, 3pm

SB247 – Prohibit neonicotinoid insecticides (Mike Phillips)

SB285 – Establish the Montana Pulse Crop Committee (Mike Lang)

HB256 – Revise legal fence laws (Casey Knudsen)

HB286 – Allow livestock loss reimbursement for mountain lion predation (Ray Shaw)

Senate Business, Labor, and Economic Affairs – Room 422, 8am

SB264 – Revising rulemaking for reporting to Board of Outfitters (Nels Swandal)

SB291 – Revise lien filings for certain ambulance bills (Tom Facey)

SB292 – Revise credit reporting laws for air ambulance debt from balance billings (Tom Facey)

SR7 – Confirm Governor’s appointees to boards related to business (Edward Buttrey)

Senate Energy and Telecommunications – Room 317, 3pm

SB201 – Allow for aggregate net metering (Jedediah Hinkle)

SB273 – Revise civil liability laws related to common carrier pipelines (Frederick Moore)

SB277 – Prohibit use of alternative energy loan account for virtual net metering (Tom Richmond)

SB299 – Generally revise hydraulic fracturing disclosure (Tom Richmond)

Senate Finance and Claims – Room 317, 8am

SB126 – Revise laws related to property valuation appeal process (Keith Regier)

SB260 – Create school facilities subtrust within coal tax trust fund (Llew Jones)

SB261 – Generally revise state fiscal laws (Llew Jones)

SB287 – Reallocate funds related to Blackfeet Tribe water compact (Llew Jones)

HB294 – Encourage accessible playgrounds statewide (Jean Price)

HB307 – Create statutory appropriation for radioactive waste account (Kathy Kelker)

Senate Fish and Game – Room 422, 3pm

SJ9 – Interim study regarding chronic wasting disease and ungulate populations (Mike Phillips)

Senate Highways and Transportation – Room 405, 3pm

SB241 – Generally revise commercial drivers license laws (Edward Buttrey)

SB262 – Revise laws governing public road access (Edith McClafferty)

SB290 – Generally revise school transportation laws (Jill Cohenour)

SB296 – Revise tow truck classification standards (Edward Buttrey)

Senate Judiciary – Room 303, 8am

SB230 – Revise laws related to commitments to the Department of Corrections (Margaret MacDonald)

SB239 – Revise landlord and tenant act regarding abandonment of rental property (Roger Webb) – Hearing Canceled

SB258 – Provide a procedure for electronically issued search warrants (Nels Swandal)

HB276 – Revise reimbursement for pharmacies (Edward Greef)

Senate Taxation – Room 405, 9am

SB252 – Revise pass-through entity withholding (Mark Blasdel)

SB253 – Revise pass-through entity withholding (Mark Blasdel)

HB175 – Revise laws related to medical savings accounts (Jim Hamilton_

House Agriculture – Room 137, 3pm

HB410 – Increase funding for noxious weed trust fund (Ray Shaw)

HB443 – Revise distribution of brand inspection fees (Bradley Hamlett)

HB444 – Redirect Jefferson Slough fund distribution for milfoil mitigation (Ray Shaw)

HB466 – Allows credit and debit card purchases as evidence for agricultural use estimate (Scott Staffanson)

House Business and Labor – Room 172, 8:30am

SB108 – Prohibit enforcement of a right of first refusal in auto franchise contracts (Gordon Vance)

HB428 – Revise laws for retail beer license lottery (Donald Jones)

HB462 – Alcohol licenses for community colleges and MUS units for educational purposes (Frank Garner)

HB496 – Exempt seasonal outdoor recreation providers' employees from certain labor laws (Vince Ricci)

House Fish, Wildlife and Parks – Room 152, 3pm

HB434 – Create Montana wildlife habitat improvement act (Kelly Flynn)

HB454 – Revising the administration of state parks and related recreational programs (Kerry White)

House Judiciary – Room 137, 8am

HB450 – Revise assumption of criminal jurisdiction of Flathead Indian country laws (Greg Hertz)

HB463 – Prohibit chronically incapacitated substance abuse in public places (Kathy Kelker)

HB472 – Prohibit county attorneys from selling alcohol or owning alcohol establishments (Wylie Galt)

House Local Government – Room 172, 3pm

HB407 – Revise sanitation in subdivisions rule requirements (Adam Hertz)

HB455 – Review non-degradation rules for subdivisions (Forrest Mandeville)

HB456 – Clarify time lines for subdivision review (Forrest Mandeville)

HB457 – Exempting certain lot redesigns from Montana Subdivision and Platting Act (Forrest Mandeville)

HB492 – Revise fire service area consolidation (Denise Hayman)

HB507 – Generally revise laws relating to review of sanitation in subdivisions (Forrest Mandeville)

House State Administration – Room 455, 8am

HB436 – Require voter approval for employer contribution increases in retirement systems (Tom Burnett)

HB439 – Clarifying when a state employment receives additional comp for supervisory duty (Ron Ehli)

House Taxation – Room 152, 8am

HB452 – Revise individual income tax rate structure (Tom Woods)

HB461 – Provide tax credit for purchase of a gun safe or trigger lock (Andrea Olsen)

Wednesday – February 22 – Legislative Day 39

Senate Business, Labor, and Economic Affairs – Room 422, 8am

SB275 – Revise construction industry in workers’ compensation premium credit program (Edward Buttrey)

SB289 – Revise laws concerning title insurance policies (Frederick Moore)

Senate Judiciary – Room 303, 8am

SB207 – Provide for confidentiality of heritage properties and paleontological remains (Frederick Moore)

SB229 – Require release of case records if child exposed to dangerous drugs (Frederick Moore)

SB249 – Generally revise criminal laws regarding testimony from accomplices/informants (Nels Swandal)

SB250 – Revise laws for prosecutorial immunity for Marsy’s law (Nels Swandal)

Senate Local Government – Room 405, 3pm

SB274 – Revise and clarify special purpose district election laws (Edward Buttrey)

SB278 – Revising local government selection procedures for professional services (Steve Hinebauch)

Senate Natural Resources – Room 303, 3pm

SB190 – Establish monitoring and reporting requirements for greenhouse gas emissions (Mike Phillips)

Senate Public Health, Welfare and Safety – Room 317, 3pm

SB272 – Revising laws related to assisted care facility licensing and mental health (Roger Webb)

Senate State Administration – Room 335, 3pm

SB279 – Generally revise legislative bill drafting process laws (Chas Vincent)

House Business and Labor – Room 172, 8:30am

HB449 – Revise the definition of wages in workers’ compensation insurance (Wylie Galt)

HB465 – Revise definition of practice of barbering (Casey Knudsen)

HB470 – Revise laws relating to marriage and family therapy (Lola Sheldon-Galloway)

HB474 – Allow consumptive hour for consumers at microdistilleries (Ray Shaw)

House Education – Room 137, 3pm

HB390 – Generally revise school funding laws (Donald Jones)

House Human Services – Room 152, 3pm

HB400 – Require disclosure of health care prices (Greg Hertz)

HB435 – Eliminate the workforce and TPA wellness provisions of the HELP Act (Tom Burnett)

HB446 – Revise comprehensive school and community treatment services (Jacob Bachmeier)

HB469 – Revise laws related to choice of practitioners (Lola Sheldon-Galloway)

HB488 – Provide copayment and coinsurance requirements for chiropractic services (Kerry White)

House Local Government – Room 172, 3pm

HB405 – Generally revise laws applicable to local government (Rob Cook)

House Natural Resources – Room 172, 3pm

HB489 – Provide regulations for moored vessels (Mark Noland)
HB498 – Extend sunset provisions for unlocking public lands program (Jo Knokey)

House State Administration – Room 455, 8am

HB447 – Authorize cancellation of local uncontested general elections by municipalities (Ross Fitzgerald)
HB448 – Revise county election laws to allow for nonpartisan elections (Ross Fitzgerald)

House Transportation – Room 455, 3pm

HB473 – Revise highway revenue laws (Frank Garner)

Thursday – February 23 – Legislative Day 40 – Last day to introduce General Bills

Senate Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation – Room 335, 3pm

HB305 – Revising laws related to county bounties on predators (Bill Harris)

Senate Business, Labor, and Economic Affairs – Room 422, 8am

SR16 – Confirm Governor's appointee to Board of Outfitters (Edward Buttrey)

Senate Fish and Game – Room 422, 3pm

SB161 – Revise motor vehicle registration fees for parks (Roger Webb) – Hearing Cancelled

SB225 – Allow lighted nocks on arrows for big game hunting (Douglas Kary)

Senate Judiciary – Room 303, 8am

SB257 – Generally revise laws related to solitary confinement (Roger Webb)

SB259 – Revise laws related to admissibility of seat belt use (Steve Fitzpatrick)

SB268 – Generally revise transparency in state employee settlement laws (Steve Fitzpatrick)

House State Administration – Room 455, 8am

HB464 – Generally revise laws related to the state employee pay plan (Janet Ellis)

Friday – February 24 – Legislative Day 41

Senate Judiciary – Room 303, 8am

SB265 – Generally revise laws for assault of an officer (Jill Cohenour)

House Human Services – Room 152, 3pm

HB451 – Require DHHS to establish registry of suicide prevention trainers (Laurie Bishop)

HB453 – Require Medicaid coverage of marriage and family therapist services (Adam Rosendale)

HB458 – Oversight of care for former MDC patients (Kirk Wagoner)

HB476 – Provide for physician assistant supervision of medical assistants (Denise Hayman)

HB487 – Revise youth athlete protection laws (Moffie Funk)

House Transportation – Room 455, 3pm

HB497 – Generally revise vehicle title laws (Gordon Pierson)