



FROM THE DESK OF . . .

Bruce McCandless

Assistant City Administrator

PO Box 1178

Billings, MT 59103

(406) 657-8222 Fax (406) 657-8390

Cell (406) 690-3062

Email: mccandlessb@ci.billings.mt.us

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TO: Mayor and City Council
Tina Volek, City Administrator
Ed Bartlett, City Lobbyist

SUBJECT: 2015 Legislative Issues Outcomes

At the February 16 City Council work session, a Councilmember asked about outcomes for the City's 2015 legislative issues. Ed Bartlett assembled that information in the attached report.

CITY OF BILLINGS 2015 LEGISLATIVE ISSUES November 2014
Revised February 2016 (Shaded Areas)

TOPIC	POSITION	REASON	2015 LEGISLATIVE STATUS and ACTIONS
Local Impact Tax Authority	Support	Would provide additional revenue for local government purposes and address impacts. May include revenue sharing and property tax relief. Topic is important resolution of League of Cities.	<i>No bills for local option tax authority were introduced (See LC 0599)</i>
Medicaid Expansion	Support	Would add an estimated 70,000 persons to insurance coverage and reduce unreimbursed costs to hospitals and medical professionals. Should include Medicaid reform. Expected to lower medical costs and provide new jobs. Indirectly impacts local governments.	<i>HB 249, sponsored by Rep. Noonan, did not pass. SB 405, sponsored by Sen. Buttrey, passed and was signed by the Governor.</i>
Early Edge Education	Monitor	Governor's requested \$35 million funding for early childhood education.	<i>This appropriation failed in House Appropriations Committee.</i>
Infrastructure Development for Eastern Montana	Support	Governor's \$45 million bonding request to fund infrastructure development in Eastern Montana.	<i>The Governor's funding request failed in House Appropriations Committee. Infrastructure was included in a number of bills (See HBs 5,7,11, 402 and 403 and SB 416). No infrastructure bill passed.</i>
Satellite Crime Lab	Support	Law enforcement in Eastern Montana would benefit from a lab located in Billings to provide crime lab services supplementing the State Crime Lab in Missoula.	<i>HB 512, sponsored by Rep. Mortensen, approved and funded a branch crime lab in Yellowstone County. It passed and was signed by the Governor.</i>
Prohibit Public Intoxication	Support	Adding public intoxication as an offense would help local governments manage transient population issues.	<i>SB 360, sponsored by Sen. Kary, would grant local governments the authority to adopt an ordinance prohibiting public intoxication. The</i>

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			<i>Bill passed in the Senate, but was tabled in House Judiciary Committee.</i>
Increase Reserve for Building Code Enforcement	Support	The current reserve authority for building code enforcement is limited to the amount needed for 12 months. Increasing the reserve authority amount to 24 months would allow for more even and efficient code enforcement ability.	<i>HB 224, sponsored by Rep. Perry, passed the House, but was tabled in Senate Local Government Committee.</i>
Exemption for Seasonal Unemployment Insurance	Support	An exemption through an application process would reduce or eliminate unemployment insurance for seasonal employees. This would save the City UI costs.	<i>SB 414, sponsored by Sen. Buttrey, passed the Senate, but failed on 2nd Reading in the House.</i>
Property Tax Re-Appraisal Cycle Reduction	Support	The DOR intends to propose a one or two-year re-appraisal cycle. Others may propose a three or four-year cycle. Shorter cycles will more accurately reflect current property values and should not require the extreme mitigation that is needed for 6 year cycles.	<i>SB 157, sponsored by Sen. Tutvedt, revises property reappraisals to a two-year cycle. It passed and was signed by the Governor.</i>
Entitlement Program(HB 124, Big Bill) Reimbursement	Support	There will be strong support for continuation of entitlement programs and funding under current law. Changes resulting in funding reductions will be opposed.	<i>Entitlement programs were continued and funded. No changes were proposed.</i>
Civil commitment and other proposals regarding homeless and transient issues	Support	The issues surrounding homeless and transient populations involve all aspects of city services, including mental health, public safety, drug use, and other law enforcement matters. A comprehensive program to address the issues would benefit the City.	<i>No bills directly addressing homeless and transient issues were introduced.</i>
Tax Increment Finance Districts	Oppose change	The City should oppose any changes to TIFD laws. The system works well under current laws.	<i>SB 404, sponsored by Sen. Arntzen, would have exempted the 95 mill school levy from the tax increment calculation. This would</i>

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			<i>have reduced the increment by 15%-20%. The Bill was tabled in Senate Taxation Committee. SJ 31 was introduced as a study resolution of TIFDs. It passed in the Senate, but died in House Taxation Committee. The interim revenue and transportation committee is studying TIF.</i>
Forfeiture of Property under Drug Laws	Oppose change	Law Enforcement supports and benefits from current forfeiture laws. Changes would weaken the programs.	<i>HB 463, sponsored by Rep. McCarthy, restricts forfeiture of assets in drug cases. This Bill passed the Legislature and was signed by the Governor.</i>
PERS Retirement Amendments	Support Oppose	Support an amendment to fix calculation problem and follow Legislative intent from the 2013 Legislative Session.	<i>HB 101, sponsored by Rep. Tom Steenberg, revises administrative laws of the public employees' retirement systems. It passed and was signed by the Governor.</i>
PERS Retirement Amendments	Oppose	Oppose proposals to expand the definition of "compensation" that would increase retirement benefits and require additional contributions to the retirement systems.	<i>No bills passed to increase or decrease benefits from the systems, including bills to change the definition of "compensation"</i>
Presumptive Illness	Oppose	Bills to enact presumptive illness workers' compensation coverage for Firefighters and Police Officers are expected. Local Governments will oppose due to cost and other factors.	<i>SB 103, sponsored by Sen. Caferro, would have provided a presumption of illness for coverage in favor of firefighters. The Bill was tabled in Committee.</i>
Tax Appeal Process Amendments	Support	The amendments are intended to help expedite resolution of tax protests by industrial and utility taxpayers.	<i>HB 41, sponsored by Rep. Hunter, allows tax appeals to either the State Tax Appeals Board or to county tax appeal boards. It passed and was signed by the Governor.</i>

Prepared by Ed Bartlett, November 2014 and revised February 2016.