

City of Billings
Weekly Legislative Report
Seventeenth Week of the Montana Legislature
April 28, 2011

As of today, April 28th, 1177 bills have been introduced (of the 2246 bill draft requests filed). Today is the 88th Legislative Day of the 90 day Session. The President and the Speaker indicated that the Legislature will “finish its business” and adjourn this evening. At this writing, at about 5 pm this day, both Legislative Chambers are conducting their third Floor Session of the day. The Senate President, the Speaker of the House and the Governor negotiated content of HB 2 and related matters during the Easter Break, and the Legislature has been acting on HB 2 and the companion bills this week.

For this Report I highlight the following bills:

- HB 2, the General Budget Bill, was passed on 3rd Reading by the House and on 2nd Reading by the Senate, after each chamber accepted the amendments proposed by the Governor. The total budget is about \$3.6 billion.
- HB 43 would specify employers’ rights to test and discharge employees related to employees use of medical marijuana. HB 43 as amended by the Senate passed the Legislature and was transmitted to the Governor. SB 423 was substantially amended by the House and a Free Conference Committee, and then the Bill was passed by the Legislature on April 27th. On April 28th, the Governor proposed amendments to the Bill. A Free Conference Committee was appointed to consider the Governor’s amendments. The new SB 423 would repeal the Medical Marijuana Act and start over with a new law to strictly regulate and control marijuana. These bills, HB 43 and SB 423, were the last remaining bills addressing medical marijuana.
- HB 106, to provide for a 24/7 sobriety project for DUI offenders, passed the Legislature and will be transmitted to the Governor.
- HB 122 is a bill modifying PERS for new hires. As amended, the Bill would not increase employer contributions to the retirement plan. It passed the Legislature on April 27th.
- HB 307, introduced by Rep. Tom Burnett, would prohibit building codes from requiring mandatory sprinkler systems primarily in single family residential housing. This Bill passed the Legislature, but was vetoed by the Governor. A veto override passed in the House but failed in the Senate.
- HB 495 would freeze local government entitlement payments at the current level for two years and then set a new formula and base year. It passed the Legislature on April 18th. HB 439 is the \$98 million general obligation bond bill for state government building projects, including a new building at MSU-B. HB 439 passed the Senate, however, after several attempts to pass the Bill as amended, the House rejected the Bill.

- Three TIFD bills introduced by Rep. Elsie Arntzen, HB 560, HB 561, HB 562, have been transmitted to the Governor. The fourth bill, HB 564, was tabled in the House Taxation Committee.
- SB 91, introduced by Sen. Taylor Brown, would allow a new city to incorporate even if it does not have a post office (for example, Lockwood). It has been signed by the Governor. HB 426 requires consent of large industrial facilities (for example, oil refineries) before such properties can be included within the boundaries of a newly incorporated city. HB 426 has also been signed by the Governor.
- SB 234, as introduced by Sen. Sonju (R. - Kalispell) and prior to amendment would have negatively impacted the ability and cost of cities to provide solid waste services when a private entity is providing similar services. The Bill, as amended, was transmitted to the Governor on April 19th. The amendments were agreed upon by the City, the League and the private solid waste service providers.
- SB 358, introduced by Sen. Ed Buttrey, would provide for creation of targeted economic development districts. The Bill, as amended, has been returned to the Senate with Governor's proposed amendments.
- SB 367, introduced by Sen. Vincent, would establish nutrient standards variances. It has broad support from interested parties, including the League of Cities and Towns and MACO. The Bill as amended passed the Legislature and has been signed by the Governor.
- SB 372, introduced by Sen. Bruce Tutvedt, would adopt a phased reduction of the business equipment tax making them contingent upon state collections of income tax. It was amended in House Taxation to provide full (100%) reimbursement to local governments. It passed both chambers of the Legislature on April 28th.

I look forward to discussing these and other legislative matters of interest to City Council. Please contact me if you have any questions or would like information on any particular topic or bill.

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