

MPMCSA-LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN
February 9, 2013

IMPORTANT DATE

Please put this date on your calendar – March 12th, Helena-Legislative Reception

The Association will again host a legislative reception in Helena at the Montana City Grill – 5:30 p.m.- 8:30 p.m. on March 12th. In the past the event has been well attended by legislators so it's important that we have as many members there as possible. A block of rooms will be reserved at the Colonial Hotel for those who wish to spend the evening. We will also plan a trip up to the Capitol either the day of or, morning after or...both. Stay tuned for more details.

Five bills regarding school funding advanced in week five that will most likely be debated together in some manner before the end of the 63rd Legislative Session. Senate Bill 175 sponsored by Llew Jones-Conrad, cuts property taxes while increasing state money for public schools by \$75 million the next two years, passed the Senate Education Committee unanimously. It would also cut local school district property taxes by \$19.5 million and more widely distribute oil & gas revenue to help more school districts dealing with the impacts of oil & gas development in eastern Montana. On the House side, House Bills 176, 177 & 228 all advanced mostly on party line vote, with Republicans in favor and Democrats opposed. All three bills would allow school districts in oil producing areas to keep larger amounts of oil & gas tax revenues based either on increased enrollment or general percentage increases. Senate Bill 175 however, has the support of the entire public school lobby and will most likely emerge as the main vehicle.

HOUSE BILL 316 – Gasoline Tax

House Bill 316 introduced by Representative Nancy Wilson-Missoula would increase the gasoline tax from 27 cents per gallon to 29 cents per gallon. The first 1 cent p.g. collected would go the highway maintenance; the second 1 cent p.g. would go to public transportation and DUI task enforcement. The bill was heard February 5th in the House Taxation Committee. POSITION: MONITOR

HOUSE BILL 346-Dyed Fuel

House Bill 346 introduced by Representative Dan Salomon-Ronan would allow vehicles designed or modified for primary use as a farm or ranch vehicle and used primarily in off-highway farming or ranching, to operate on public roads and highways with dyed fuel. These sections of fuel tax/use law are enforced by the Motor Carrier Services and the Highway Patrol. The bill has passed out of the House Agriculture Committee: POSITION: MONITOR

HOUSE BILL 347-Transportation Contract Indemnification

House Bill 347 introduced by Steve Fitzpatrick-Great Falls – at the request of the Motor Carriers Association, would void certain types of cross-party indemnification from transportation contracts. The bill has passed the House and will be transferred to the Senate. POSITION: SUPPORT

SENATE BILL 116-Special Fuel Permits

Senate Bill 116 by Senator Ron Arthun-Wilsaw, repeals the controversial legislation passed by the MT Contractors Association in 2009 that requires small contractors to secure a temporary special fuel permit and file a \$500 bond. The legislation in fact, repeals the temporary permits in total unless the vehicle (over 26,000 lbs. gvw) is not covered under the International Fuel Tax Agreement. The bill has passed the Senate. POSITION: MONITOR

SENATE BILL 226-Dyed Fuel

Senator Bill 226 introduced by Eric Moore-Miles City would allow vehicles that are equipped with a feed-delivery box to operate on public roads and highways using dyed fuel. The feed-delivery box must be permanently affixed to the vehicle; be used exclusively for the feeding of livestock; and the GVW must be greater than 12,000 lbs. POSITION: MONITOR

GENERAL BILLS

SENATE BILL 96 – By Senator Bruce Tudvedt-Kalispell. Lowers the business equipment tax to 1.5% for the first \$10 million in assessed property and to 3% for assessed property over \$10 million in value. SB96 has passed the Senate and will be transmitted to the House.

HOUSE BILL 87 – By Representative Jeff Welborn-Dillon. HB87 that will give the state insurance commissioner power to review increases in health insurance premiums has passed the House Business Committee 19-1. This is a big change from last Session when Republicans killed a similar proposal because it was associated with implementing the 2010 “Obamacare” Act. If the bill passes the Legislature, the office won’t have the power to force the insurer to lower its increases but, it should have leverage to negotiate a lower rate for consumers. Currently Montana has some of the highest insurance premiums in the nation.

Please contact me at the Email address listed below if there are questions or concerns.

Submitted by

Ronna Alexander-Executive Director

ccomm@bresnan.net