

Montana Legislative Update – Week of March 30, 2019

HB385 (Authorize blackjack to be played in licensed establishments) Passed the House Appropriations Committee and 3rd reading on the House Floor. It has been transmitted to the Senate. As originally presented in House Taxation, the bill had nothing to do with fire or emergency services. However, an amendment was presented that would use a portion of the 5% tax on live blackjack tables to fund \$250,000 per year for assistance to volunteer firefighters to help with workers compensation premiums. The Montana Fire Alliance supports the bill.

HB31 (Revise fire assessment fees) Was tabled in House Natural Resources Committee on Wednesday, March 27th, and is probably dead. The bill was developed by the Environmental Quality Council Interim Committee. It would have assessed fees to land outside of municipalities for wildland fire protection preparedness and aviation equipment replacement. The Montana Fire Alliance was watching the bill.

SB323 (Allow the creation and assessment of a public safety district) Was tabled in the Senate Local Government Committee on Wednesday, March 27th, and is probably dead. The bill would allow for the establishment of public safety districts. The Montana Fire Alliance was watching the bill.

SB17 (Authorize creation of regional fire protection service authorities) Failed 3rd reading in the Senate on Thursday, March 28th, and is probably dead. It needed a 2/3 majority vote due to its immunity provisions and it fell just a little shy of that mark. The bill would allow Municipal (regardless of class) fire departments, rural fire districts, rural fire protection (volunteer and paid departments), fire companies, and fire service areas to merge with any other adjacent fire jurisdiction to establish a regional fire authority. The Montana Fire Alliance supported the bill.

Hearings and issues this upcoming week:

There will undoubtedly be hearings, and actions, scheduled for bills that we are following in the coming week. We will report the results of those hearings next week. Stay tuned for more summaries!

To follow the Montana Fire Alliance's watch list go to www.mtfirealliance.org

Respectfully Submitted
Leonard Lundby
Montana Fire Alliance - Legislative Liaison