

Montana Legislative Update - The past week in review – March 24, 2019

SB38 (Allow emergency care providers to offer community health care) Was passed on a 14-5 vote in the House Human Services Committee on Friday, March 22nd. It is scheduled for a 2nd reading vote on the House floor on Monday, March 25th. It would allow emergency care providers to be involved in community-integrated health care services under the regulation of the Board of Medical Examiners. The Montana Fire Alliance supports the bill.

HB296 (Revise laws related to permissible fireworks) Was tabled in the Senate Judiciary Committee on Wednesday, March 15th, on a 5-5 vote. The bill would allow the use of sky rockets, roman candles and bottle rockets which are currently prohibited in Montana. The Montana Fire Alliance was opposed to the bill.

HB385 (Authorize blackjack to be played in licensed establishments) Passed 2nd reading on the House Floor 57-43 on Wednesday, March 20th and then had a hearing in the House Appropriations Committee. This bill requires a little explanation. As originally presented to the House Taxation Committee, the bill had nothing to do with fire or emergency services. However, at some point in the process, 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 amendment used identical language to that contained in HB28, the fireworks tax bill, that is now tabled. The Montana Fire Alliance supports the bill, although we have had little to do with the success that it has been enjoying.

HB31 (Revise fire assessment fees) Had a hearing before the House Natural Resources Committee on Wednesday, March 20th. This bill was developed by the Environmental Quality Council Interim Committee. It assesses fees to land outside of municipalities for wildland fire protection preparedness and aviation equipment replacement. There were no proponents and numerous opponents. The Montana Fire Alliance is watching the bill.

SB323 (Allow the creation and assessment of a public safety district) Had a hearing in the House Local Government Committee on Monday, March 18th. The bill would allow for the establishment of public safety districts. The Montana Fire Alliance is watching the bill.

Hearings and issues this upcoming week:

SB17 (Authorize creation of regional fire protection service authorities) Scheduled for a 2nd reading Senate Floor vote on Monday, March 25th. 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 bill had been held up by its sponsor in an attempt to appease the timber companies objections. While it is now moving again, it faces a tough uphill battle to win a 2/3 majority vote in the House and Senate due to its immunity provisions. The Montana Fire Alliance supports the bill.

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

Respectfully Submitted
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