



Legislative Update

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Fallen Brother

I informed you all last week of the tragic passing of Department of Revenue President Kevin Bock. For those of you who knew Kevin you know how much we will miss his passion. You can read his [obituary](#) in the Helena Independent Record and/or read the tribute I wrote to him for [People's Voice: The Online Home of the Montana Labor Movement](#).

From the exec's chair



Governor Steve Bullock delivered his third State of the State address to the 65th Legislature on Tuesday, January 24. Governor Bullock assured the legislature that Montana's economy is robust and growing despite declining revenues, due in part to a cooling commodities market. This has left the ending fund balance somewhere south of \$109 million well short of the \$300 million the administration had at the beginning of the biennium. It's a good thing he insisted on a \$300 million rainy day fund at the conclusion of the 2015 session. You can read a full text copy of his address [here](#). An interesting side note to the state of the state address the following dailies serving northwest, hi-line, and eastern Montana failed to report on Governor Bullock's address or Representative Knudsen's rebuttal: Kalispell Daily Interlake, Havre Daily News, Sidney Herald, Miles City Star.

Speaker of the House Austin Knudsen (R-Culbertson) had the honor of delivering the Republican Party rebuttal to Governor Bullock's address. Representative Knudsen's message was much gloomier writing, "In the bubble of Helena and the State Capitol it can be easy to overlook reality. Good-paying state government jobs are plentiful, we sit in a beautiful building, and most of the time the Governor and his agencies have the run of the place—except for a few months every couple years when the legislature comes to town." I'm pretty sure that if they went across the street to the Montana Historical Society they would soon see that the "government workers" haven't made off the state silver set...yet! You can read the full text copy of Knudsen's address [here](#) and a synopsis from Lee Enterprises [here](#).

Legislative watch list

New bills add to the watch list for this [legislative session](#): HB 136, HB 248, HB 262, HB 273, SB 85, SB 141, and SB 148. Please contact your [MPEA staff](#) regarding bills on this list or bills you believe MPEA should be tracking. Those bills appearing in **bold red** were tabled in committee.

Bills

- [HB 2](#) General Appropriations Act (Governor Bullock's proposed biennial budget)
- [HB 13](#) State employee pay plan
- [HB 14](#) Bonding program (Governor Bullock's infrastructure bill)
- [HB 72](#) Increase university system supplemental contributions to TRS
- [HB 94](#) Generally revise public safety officer standards/training council laws
- [HB 136](#) actuarial funding for the Game Wardens and Peace Officers Retirement System – Passed 2nd reading in the House and on its way to House Appropriations.
- [HB 155](#) Eliminate election day as state holiday
- **[HB 169](#) Raise minimum wage in Montana – Tabled in House Business & Labor**
- [HB 181](#) Establish requirements for police dogs
- **[HB 185](#) Establish grant program to eliminate tuition for certain postsecondary programs – Tabled in Committee.**

- [HB 202](#) Generally revise laws related to government employees and officers
- [HB 208](#) Provide that it is unlawful to retaliate against public whistleblowers
- [HB 248](#) Revise anti-bullying laws – House Education
- [HB 262](#) Generally revise concealed carry regulations for legal gun owners – House Judiciary
- [HB 273](#) Generally revise concealed weapons laws – House Judiciary
- [SB 5](#) Revise INTERCAP loan program
- [SB 57](#) Clarify highway patrol funding sources and increase certain registration fees
- [SB 69](#) **Create task force to study public employee health benefits – Tabled in committee**
- [SB 85](#) Submitting a 6-mill ley for support of the Montana University System to voters. Passed Senate referred to House Tax
- [SB 87](#) Revise campaign finance report laws
- [SB 99](#) Prohibit enforcement of federal firearms laws by Montana public employees. Referred to Senate Judiciary.
- [SB 141](#) Establish commission to study legislative compensation and conduct – Senate State Administration
- [SB 148](#) Establish the Montana Pay Equity Act – Senate Business, Labor, and Economic Affairs

Bill drafts – only new bill drafts will be listed in future legislative updates.

- No new bill drafts of note at this time

Contact your legislator

Legislators respond when they hear from their constituents. That's you! Not sure about your House or Senate district, no problem Legislative Services has a webpage for that [find a legislator](#). Call or email individuals or entire committees through the Legislative Services Division online [contact your legislator](#) page.

Watch & Listen

Legislative Services has made it even easier to [watch and listen](#) to committee hearings online through your home or work computer. You can even go back and review archived minutes of committee hearings.

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