



Alternative Energy Resources Organization

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Energy Legislative Update: Progress in a Difficult 2011 Session!

By Sarah Lesnar

The indicator of the success of AERO's 2011 legislative strategy lies in the record of bills that we opposed: all of them were either stopped by the Legislature with bi-partisan opposition, or vetoed by Governor Brian Schweitzer. AERO fact sheets and lobbying played a significant role in stopping these bills. The Governor took the traditional veto ceremony to a new level this session by ordering up a "VETO" cattle brand, which he used on a couple of AERO's priority "oppose" bills, including:

- SB 159, which would have crippled Montana's energy code for new buildings by requiring a five-year payback on all measures, and
- SB 253, which would have removed widely used tax credits for energy efficiency investments.

Other defeated bills:

- HB 237 would have removed the community ownership provision from Montana's Renewable Energy Standard,
- SB 104 would have eliminated the PSC's authority to establish effective "inclining block rate structures" used to incentivize conservation, and
- SB 226 would have weakened existing net-metering provisions and significantly discouraged the development of small-scale renewable energy generating facilities.



AERO and our partners also supported attempts to move Montana forward relative to renewable energy, conservation, and efficiency. SB332 would have increased the amount of wind energy that flows through our power lines by increasing Montana's renewable energy portfolio standard to 25% by 2025. It never got out of its first committee. Even seemingly obvious actions like legislation to include an energy efficiency expert on the state council that sets energy efficiency standards for our buildings (HB 406) died in committee. Despite these setbacks, AERO remains committed to community prosperity supported by conservation and homegrown renewable energy.

Please read or listen to Ben Brouwer's April 28, 2011, MTPR Commentary for more information associated with the 2011 legislative session: <http://www.mtpr.net/commentaries/979>



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