

BEFORE THE HOUSE FEDERAL RELATIONS, ENERGY
AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

TESTIMONY ON SB 50 and SB 83
OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL
AND RENEWABLE NORTHWEST PROJECT

The Natural Resources Defense Council and Renewable Northwest Project appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bills 50 and 83. Both bills have as their goal facilitating the development of Montana's renewable resources. This, we believe, is critically important. Renewable resources are the future and Montana needs to take advantage of the fact that it is blessed with an abundance of renewable resources.

The development of renewable resources will produce a myriad of benefits to the state. For one, renewable resources have no fuel cost, thus the energy they produce has built-in price stability and is not subject to the risk of increases in fuel costs as are conventional sources of energy. Renewable resources, of course, have significant environmental advantages over conventional resources. Finally, the development of Montana's renewable resources will produce significant local economic benefits.

The alternative energy system loan law (that SB 50 amends) and the renewable resource grant and loan program law (that SB 83 amends) constitute a policy determination on the part of prior Montana legislatures that renewable resource development should occur. Both statutes demonstrate that the State was determined to support and encourage renewable resource development.

SB 50 and SB 83 are perfectly consistent with this overarching policy. SB 50 tweaks the alternative energy loan law to expand the kinds of entities that can take advantage of the loan and makes the terms of the loan more attractive. Consequently, if SB 50 is enacted into law, there will be increased renewable resource development funded by the alternative energy loan account.

SB 83 simply clarifies the renewable resource grant and loan program to specify that projects that facilitate the use of renewable resources can receive funding.

In conclusion, both SB 50 and SB 83 represent good public policy in that they promote and encourage the development of Montana's renewable resources.

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