

# Montana Sportsmen ALLIANCE

## Voice of Reason on Montana Fish and Wildlife Issues

TO THE SENATE TAXATION COMMITTEE:

**RE: SB 169-** AN ACT REVISING PAYMENTS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE, AND PARKS TO COUNTIES FOR LAND OWNED OR HELD UNDER EASEMENT BY THE DEPARTMENT; EXEMPTING LANDOWNERS FROM PROPERTY TAXES FOR THE PORTION OF LAND HELD UNDER EASEMENT;

**POSITION:** Montana Sportsmen's Alliance hereby goes on record **STRONGLY OPPOSING** this bill based on the following reasons:

By definition, easements are a way to keep producers on the land and compensate them for agreeing not to develop. The compensation is based on appraisals of the value of what they are giving up. The land remains the property of the owner, who should be the one to pay the taxes.

This is not even a thinly veiled attempt to destroy the Habitat Montana program, a program that is supported by sportsmen and women and one of the most overly subscribed private land programs by landowners of this State, or for that matter any State.

This bill is punitive to Montana Sportsmen/women. It would single out FWP and the revenue generated by sportsmen/women hunting license fees as the only entity in Montana, of those that can hold conservation easements, that would be required to pay property taxes for the private landowner.

Taxes a private landowner pays to the counties do not change after a conservation easement is placed on the property. County taxes are based on current state, not some speculative development potential.

This is a draconian penalty to the Habitat Montana program when it uses the conservation easement tool to conserve important wildlife habitat, provide for public access and meet a private landowners interests.

We also have reason to be concerned that the use of hunting license revenue to pay private land taxes could be viewed as an illegal diversion of that license revenue and could jeopardize Montana's access to PR and DJ dollars.

Once again we would like to state our **STRONG OPPOSITION** to SB 169.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Montana Sportsmen Alliance Leadership Group

[www.montanasportsmenalliance.com](http://www.montanasportsmenalliance.com)

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