

**SENATE JOURNAL  
68TH LEGISLATURE  
EIGHTEENTH LEGISLATIVE DAY**

Helena, Montana  
January 25, 2023

Senate Chambers  
State Capitol

Senate convened at 1:00 p.m. President Ellsworth presiding. Invocation by Pastor Johnson. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Roll Call. Forty-nine members present. Senator Kelker, excused. Quorum Present.

**BILLS AND JOURNALS** (Lang, Chair)

Correctly printed: **SB 3, SB 8, SB 16, SB 21, SB 24, SB 30, SB 37, SB 58, SB 72, SB 96, SB 112, SB 128, SB 129, SB 143, SB 158, SB 159, SB 173, SB 204, SB 205, SB 206, SB 207, SB 208, SB 209, SR 31, SR 32, SR 33, SR 39, SR 40, SR 41, SR 47, SJ 7, HB 61, HB 113.**

Correctly engrossed: **SB 142.**

Transmitted to the House: **SB 12, SB 13, SB 29, SB 42, SB 43, SB 68, SB 106, SB 155, SJ 5.**

**REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

**AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK AND IRRIGATION** (Lang, Chair) 01/24/2023  
**HB 59**, be concurred in.

**BUSINESS, LABOR, AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS** (Small, Chair) 01/24/2023  
**SB 105**, introduced bill, be amended with [SB0105.001.001](#) and, as amended, do pass.

**SB 167**, do pass.

**SB 179**, do pass.

**SJ 2**, do pass.

**HB 30**, be concurred in.

**HB 43**, be concurred in.

**HB 70**, be concurred in.

**HB 71**, be concurred in.

**HB 98**, be concurred in.

**HB 120**, be concurred in.

**HB 123**, be concurred in.

**HB 138**, be concurred in.

**HB 139**, be concurred in.

**HB 145**, be concurred in.

**HB 157**, be concurred in.

**HB 160**, be concurred in.

**HB 166**, be concurred in.

**FISH AND GAME** (Hinebauch, Chair) 01/24/2023

**HB 99**, be concurred in.

**HB 133**, be concurred in.

**HB 162**, be concurred in.

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**JUDICIARY** (Regier, Chair) 01/17/2023  
**SB 135**, do pass.

**JUDICIARY** (Regier, Chair) 01/24/2023  
**SB 94**, introduced bill, be amended with [SB0094.001.004](#) and, as amended, do pass.  
**SB 148**, do pass.  
**HB 18**, be amended with [HB0018.001.002](#) and, as amended, be concurred in.

**MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

House bills passed and transmitted to the Senate for concurrence: 01/24/2023

**HB 15**, introduced by D. Bedey  
**HB 28**, introduced by R. Knudsen  
**HB 72**, introduced by R. Marshall  
**HB 89**, introduced by P. Green  
**HB 101**, introduced by J. Gillette  
**HB 129**, introduced by T. Welch  
**HB 146**, introduced by J. Kassmier  
**HB 155**, introduced by K. Zolnikov  
**HB 185**, introduced by R. Fitzgerald  
**HB 260**, introduced by M. Regier

**FIRST READING AND COMMITMENT OF BILLS**

The following Senate bills were introduced, read first time, and referred to committee:

**SB 210**, introduced by C. Glimm, referred to Judiciary.  
**SB 211**, introduced by T. McGillvray, referred to Business, Labor, and Economic Affairs.  
**SB 212**, introduced by D. Lenz, referred to Education and Cultural Resources.  
**SB 213**, introduced by E. McClafferty, D. Salomon, M. Lang, R. Lynch, A. Olsen, W. Curdy, M. Dunwell, J. Ellis, D. Hayman, C. Pope, S. Webber, E. Boldman, S. Morigeau, J. Gross, R. Tempel, D. Harvey, P. Flowers, M. Fox, D. Hawk, S. O'Brien, T. Vermeire, J. Lynch, M. Romano, referred to Education and Cultural Resources.  
**SB 214**, introduced by E. McClafferty, D. Salomon, M. Lang, R. Lynch, W. Curdy, M. Dunwell, J. Ellis, D. Hayman, C. Pope, S. Webber, E. Boldman, S. Morigeau, J. Gross, R. Tempel, D. Harvey, P. Flowers, M. Fox, D. Hawk, S. O'Brien, T. Vermeire, J. Lynch, referred to Business, Labor, and Economic Affairs.  
**SB 215**, introduced by S. Fitzpatrick, referred to Local Government.  
**SB 216**, introduced by S. Fitzpatrick, referred to Judiciary.  
**SB 217**, introduced by B. Gillespie, referred to Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation.

The following House bills were introduced, read first time, and referred to committee:

**HB 15**, introduced by D. Bedey (by request of the Office of Budget and Program Planning), referred to Education and Cultural Resources.

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**HB 28**, introduced by R. Knudsen (by request of the Legislative Council), referred to Legislative Administration.

**HB 72**, introduced by R. Marshall (by request of the Department of Revenue), referred to Business, Labor, and Economic Affairs.

**HB 89**, introduced by P. Green (by request of the Department of Military Affairs), referred to State Administration.

**HB 101**, introduced by J. Gillette (by request of the Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee), referred to Business, Labor, and Economic Affairs.

**HB 129**, introduced by T. Welch (by request of the Department of Revenue), referred to Highways and Transportation.

**HB 146**, introduced by J. Kassmier (by request of the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks), referred to Fish and Game.

**HB 155**, introduced by K. Zolnikov (by request of the Department of Revenue), referred to Business, Labor, and Economic Affairs.

**HB 185**, introduced by R. Fitzgerald, referred to Natural Resources.

**HB 260**, introduced by M. Regier, R. Knudsen, referred to Legislative Administration.

**SECOND READING OF BILLS  
(COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE)**

Majority Leader Fitzpatrick moved the Senate resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole for consideration of business on second reading. Motion carried. Senator Ellis in the chair.

Mr. President: We, your Committee of the Whole, having had under consideration business on second reading, recommend as follows:

**SB 32** - Senator Cuffe moved **SB 32** do pass. Motion carried as follows:

Yeas: Bartel, Beard, Bogner, Boldman, Brown, Cuffe, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Flowers, Fox, Friedel, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Gross, Hayman, Hertz, Lang, Lenz, Lynch, Mandeville, Manzella, McClafferty, McGillvray, McKamey, Molnar, Morigeau, Mr. President, Noland, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Regier K, Sales, Salomon, Small, Tempel, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Vermeire, Webber, Welborn, Zolnikov.

Total 47

Nays: Emrich, Hinebauch.

Total 2

Voted absentee: None.

Total 0

Excused: Kelker.

Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.

Total 0

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**SB 38** - Senator Brown moved **SB 38** do pass. Motion carried as follows:

Yeas: Bartel, Beard, Bogner, Brown, Cuffe, Curdy, Emrich, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Friedel, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Mandeville, Manzella, McGillvray, McKamey, Molnar, Mr. President, Noland, Regier K, Sales, Salomon, Small, Tempel, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Vermeire, Welborn, Zolnikov.

Total 35

Nays: Boldman, Dunwell, Ellis, Flowers, Fox, Gross, Hayman, Lynch, McClafferty, Morigeau, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Webber.

Total 14

Voted absentee: None.

Total 0

Excused: Kelker.

Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.

Total 0

**SB 53** - Senator Lang moved **SB 53** do pass. Motion carried as follows:

Yeas: Bartel, Beard, Bogner, Boldman, Brown, Cuffe, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Flowers, Fox, Friedel, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Gross, Hayman, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Lynch, Mandeville, Manzella, McClafferty, McGillvray, McKamey, Molnar, Morigeau, Mr. President, Noland, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Regier K, Sales, Salomon, Small, Tempel, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Vermeire, Webber, Welborn, Zolnikov.

Total 48

Nays: Emrich.

Total 1

Voted absentee: None.

Total 0

Excused: Kelker.

Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.

Total 0

**SB 113** - Senator Lenz moved **SB 113** do pass. Motion carried as follows:

Yeas: Bartel, Beard, Bogner, Boldman, Brown, Cuffe, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Emrich, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Flowers, Fox, Friedel, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Gross, Hayman, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Lynch, Mandeville, Manzella, McClafferty, McGillvray, McKamey, Molnar, Morigeau,

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Mr. President, Noland, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Regier K, Sales, Salomon, Small, Tempel, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Vermeire, Webber, Welborn, Zolnikov.

Total 49

Nays: None.

Total 0

Voted absentee: None.

Total 0

Excused: Kelker.

Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.

Total 0

**SB 119** - Senator Webber moved **SB 119** do pass. Motion carried as follows:

Yeas: Bartel, Beard, Bogner, Boldman, Brown, Cuffe, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Emrich, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Flowers, Fox, Friedel, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Gross, Hayman, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Lynch, Mandeville, Manzella, McClafferty, McGillvray, McKamey, Molnar, Morigeau, Mr. President, Noland, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Regier K, Sales, Salomon, Small, Tempel, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Vermeire, Webber, Welborn, Zolnikov.

Total 49

Nays: None.

Total 0

Voted absentee: None.

Total 0

Excused: Kelker.

Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.

Total 0

**SB 121** - Senator Beard moved **SB 121** do pass.

**SB 121** - Senator Trebas moved **SB 121**, second reading copy, be amended with [SB0121.001.006](#).

Amendment **not adopted** as follows:

Yeas: Bogner, Brown, Emrich, Friedel, Fuller, Glimm, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Mandeville, Manzella, McGillvray, Noland, Regier K, Small, Tempel, Trebas, Usher, Welborn, Zolnikov.

Total 20

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Nays: Bartel, Beard, Boldman, Cuffe, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Flowers, Fox, Gillespie, Gross, Hayman, Hertz, Lynch, McClafferty, McKamey, Molnar, Morigeau, Mr. President, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Sales, Salomon, Vance, Vermeire, Webber.

Total 29

Voted absentee: None.

Total 0

Excused: Kelker.

Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.

Total 0

**SB 121** - Senator Molnar moved **SB 121**, second reading copy, be amended with [SB0121.001.007](#).

Amendment **not adopted** as follows:

Yeas: Bogner, Boldman, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Flowers, Fox, Friedel, Gross, Hayman, Lynch, Mandeville, McClafferty, Molnar, Morigeau, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Salomon, Small, Tempel, Webber.

Total 22

Nays: Bartel, Beard, Brown, Cuffe, Emrich, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Manzella, McGillvray, McKamey, Mr. President, Noland, Regier K, Sales, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Vermeire, Welborn, Zolnikov.

Total 27

Voted absentee: None.

Total 0

Excused: Kelker.

Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.

Total 0

**SB 121** - Senator Molnar moved **SB 121**, second reading copy, be amended with [SB0121.001.008](#).

Amendment **not adopted** as follows:

Yeas: Bogner, Boldman, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Flowers, Fox, Friedel, Gross, Hayman, Lynch, Mandeville, McClafferty, Molnar, Morigeau, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Webber, Welborn.

Total 20

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Nays: Bartel, Beard, Brown, Cuffe, Emrich, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Manzella, McGillvray, McKamey, Mr. President, Noland, Regier K, Sales, Salomon, Small, Tempel, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Vermeire, Zolnikov.  
Total 29

Voted absentee: None.  
Total 0

Excused: Kelker.  
Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.  
Total 0

**SB 121** - Senator Dunwell moved **SB 121**, second reading copy, be amended with [SB0121.001.009](#).

Amendment **not adopted** as follows:

Yeas: Boldman, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Flowers, Fox, Gross, Hayman, Lynch, McClafferty, Morigeau, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Webber.  
Total 15

Nays: Bartel, Beard, Bogner, Brown, Cuffe, Emrich, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Friedel, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Mandeville, Manzella, McGillvray, McKamey, Molnar, Mr. President, Noland, Regier K, Sales, Salomon, Small, Tempel, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Vermeire, Welborn, Zolnikov.  
Total 34

Voted absentee: None.  
Total 0

Excused: Kelker.  
Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.  
Total 0

Thereupon, the Senate **reverted to the original motion** of Senator Beard which passed as follows:

Yeas: Bartel, Beard, Bogner, Brown, Cuffe, Emrich, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Friedel, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Mandeville, Manzella, McGillvray, McKamey, Molnar, Mr. President, Noland, Regier K, Sales, Salomon, Small, Tempel, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Vermeire, Welborn, Zolnikov.  
Total 34

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Nays: Boldman, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Flowers, Fox, Gross, Hayman, Lynch, McClafferty, Morigeau, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Webber.

Total 15

Voted absentee: None.

Total 0

Excused: Kelker.

Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.

Total 0

**SB 124** - Senator Hertz moved **SB 124** do pass. Motion carried as follows:

Yeas: Bartel, Beard, Bogner, Brown, Cuffe, Emrich, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Friedel, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Mandeville, Manzella, McGillvray, McKamey, Mr. President, Noland, Regier K, Sales, Salomon, Small, Tempel, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Vermeire, Welborn, Zolnikov.

Total 33

Nays: Boldman, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Flowers, Fox, Gross, Hayman, Lynch, McClafferty, Molnar, Morigeau, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Webber.

Total 16

Voted absentee: None.

Total 0

Excused: Kelker.

Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.

Total 0

**SB 134** - Majority Leader Fitzpatrick moved **SB 134** do pass. Motion carried as follows:

Yeas: Bartel, Beard, Bogner, Brown, Cuffe, Emrich, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Friedel, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Mandeville, Manzella, McGillvray, McKamey, Molnar, Mr. President, Noland, Regier K, Sales, Salomon, Small, Tempel, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Vermeire, Welborn, Zolnikov.

Total 34

Nays: Boldman, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Flowers, Fox, Gross, Hayman, Lynch, McClafferty, Morigeau, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Webber.

Total 15

Voted absentee: None.

Total 0



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Excused: Kelker.  
Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.  
Total 0

**SB 154** - Senator Regier moved **SB 154** do pass. Motion carried as follows:

Yeas: Bartel, Beard, Bogner, Brown, Cuffe, Emrich, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Friedel, Fuller, Glimm, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Mandeville, Manzella, McGillvray, Molnar, Mr. President, Noland, Regier K, Sales, Small, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Zolnikov.  
Total 28

Nays: Boldman, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Flowers, Fox, Gillespie, Gross, Hayman, Lynch, McClafferty, McKamey, Morigeau, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Salomon, Tempel, Vermeire, Webber, Welborn.  
Total 21

Voted absentee: None.  
Total 0

Excused: Kelker.  
Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.  
Total 0

**SB 166** - Senator Lynch moved **SB 166** do pass. Motion carried as follows:

Yeas: Bartel, Beard, Bogner, Boldman, Brown, Cuffe, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Emrich, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Flowers, Fox, Friedel, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Hayman, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Lynch, Mandeville, Manzella, McClafferty, McGillvray, McKamey, Molnar, Morigeau, Mr. President, Noland, O'Brien, Pope, Regier K, Sales, Salomon, Small, Tempel, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Vermeire, Webber, Welborn, Zolnikov.  
Total 47

Nays: Gross, Olsen.  
Total 2

Voted absentee: None.  
Total 0

Excused: Kelker.  
Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.  
Total 0

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Majority Leader Fitzpatrick moved the committee **rise and report**. Motion carried. Committee arose. Senate resumed. President Ellsworth presiding.

Senator Ellis moved the Committee of the Whole report be adopted. Report adopted as follows:

Yeas: Bartel, Beard, Bogner, Brown, Cuffe, Emrich, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Fox, Friedel, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Hayman, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Lynch, Mandeville, Manzella, McGillvray, McKamey, Molnar, Mr. President, Noland, Regier K, Sales, Salomon, Small, Tempel, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Vermeire, Welborn, Zolnikov.

Total 37

Nays: Boldman, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Flowers, Gross, McClafferty, Morigeau, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Webber.

Total 12

Voted absentee: None.

Total 0

Excused: Kelker.

Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.

Total 0

### THIRD READING OF BILLS

**SB 16** passed as follows:

Yeas: Bartel, Beard, Bogner, Boldman, Brown, Cuffe, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Emrich, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Flowers, Fox, Friedel, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Gross, Hayman, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Lynch, Mandeville, Manzella, McClafferty, McGillvray, McKamey, Molnar, Morigeau, Mr. President, Noland, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Regier K, Sales, Salomon, Small, Tempel, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Vermeire, Webber, Welborn, Zolnikov.

Total 49

Nays: None.

Total 0

Voted absentee: None.

Total 0

Excused: Kelker.

Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.

Total 0

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**SB 24** passed as follows:

Yeas: Bartel, Beard, Bogner, Boldman, Brown, Cuffe, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Flowers, Fox, Friedel, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Gross, Hayman, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Lynch, Mandeville, Manzella, McClafferty, McGillvray, McKamey, Morigeau, Mr. President, Noland, O'Brien, Pope, Regier K, Sales, Salomon, Small, Tempel, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Vermeire, Webber, Welborn, Zolnikov.

Total 46

Nays: Emrich, Molnar, Olsen.

Total 3

Voted absentee: None.

Total 0

Excused: Kelker.

Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.

Total 0

**SB 37** passed as follows:

Yeas: Bartel, Beard, Bogner, Brown, Cuffe, Emrich, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Fox, Friedel, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Lynch, Mandeville, Manzella, McGillvray, McKamey, Molnar, Mr. President, Noland, Regier K, Sales, Salomon, Small, Tempel, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Vermeire, Welborn, Zolnikov.

Total 36

Nays: Boldman, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Flowers, Gross, Hayman, McClafferty, Morigeau, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Webber.

Total 13

Voted absentee: None.

Total 0

Excused: Kelker.

Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.

Total 0

**SB 96** passed as follows:

Yeas: Bartel, Beard, Bogner, Brown, Cuffe, Emrich, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Friedel, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Mandeville, Manzella, McGillvray, McKamey,

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Total 33

Nays: Boldman, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Flowers, Fox, Gross, Hayman, Lynch, McClafferty, Molnar, Morigeau, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Webber.

Total 16

Voted absentee: None.

Total 0

Excused: Kelker.

Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.

Total 0

**SB 128** passed as follows:

Yeas: Bartel, Beard, Bogner, Boldman, Brown, Cuffe, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Emrich, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Flowers, Fox, Friedel, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Gross, Hayman, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Mandeville, Manzella, McClafferty, McGillvray, McKamey, Morigeau, Mr. President, Noland, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Regier K, Sales, Salomon, Small, Tempel, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Vermeire, Webber, Welborn, Zolnikov.

Total 47

Nays: Lynch, Molnar.

Total 2

Voted absentee: None.

Total 0

Excused: Kelker.

Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.

Total 0

**SB 143** passed as follows:

Yeas: Bartel, Beard, Bogner, Brown, Cuffe, Emrich, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Friedel, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Mandeville, Manzella, McGillvray, McKamey, Molnar, Mr. President, Noland, Regier K, Sales, Salomon, Small, Tempel, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Vermeire, Welborn, Zolnikov.

Total 34

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Nays: Boldman, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Flowers, Fox, Gross, Hayman, Lynch, McClafferty, Morigeau, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Webber.

Total 15

Voted absentee: None.

Total 0

Excused: Kelker.

Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.

Total 0

**SB 158** passed as follows:

Yeas: Bartel, Beard, Bogner, Brown, Cuffe, Emrich, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Friedel, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Mandeville, Manzella, McGillvray, McKamey, Molnar, Mr. President, Noland, Regier K, Sales, Salomon, Small, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Vermeire, Welborn, Zolnikov.

Total 33

Nays: Boldman, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Flowers, Fox, Gross, Hayman, Lynch, McClafferty, Morigeau, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Tempel, Webber.

Total 16

Voted absentee: None.

Total 0

Excused: Kelker.

Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.

Total 0

**SB 159** passed as follows:

Yeas: Bartel, Beard, Bogner, Brown, Emrich, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Friedel, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Mandeville, Manzella, McGillvray, McKamey, Molnar, Mr. President, Noland, Regier K, Sales, Salomon, Small, Tempel, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Vermeire, Welborn, Zolnikov.

Total 33

Nays: Boldman, Cuffe, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Flowers, Fox, Gross, Hayman, Lynch, McClafferty, Morigeau, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Webber.

Total 16

Voted absentee: None.

Total 0

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Excused: Kelker.  
Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.  
Total 0

**SB 173** passed as follows:

Yeas: Bartel, Beard, Bogner, Boldman, Brown, Cuffe, Curdy, Dunwell, Ellis, Emrich, Esp, Fitzpatrick, Flowers, Fox, Friedel, Fuller, Gillespie, Glimm, Gross, Hayman, Hertz, Hinebauch, Lang, Lenz, Lynch, Mandeville, Manzella, McClafferty, McGillvray, McKamey, Molnar, Morigeau, Mr. President, Noland, O'Brien, Olsen, Pope, Regier K, Sales, Salomon, Small, Tempel, Trebas, Usher, Vance, Vermeire, Webber, Welborn, Zolnikov.  
Total 49

Nays: None.  
Total 0

Voted absentee: None.  
Total 0

Excused: Kelker.  
Total 1

Absent or not voting: None.  
Total 0

### MOTIONS

Majority Leader Fitzpatrick moved to take **SB 207** from State Administration and re-refer it to Natural Resources. Without objection, so ordered.

Majority Leader Fitzpatrick moved to take **HB 52** from Highways and Transportation and re-refer it to Energy and Telecommunications. Without objection, so ordered.

Majority Leader Fitzpatrick moved that **SB 121** and **SB 124**, heard under second reading this date, be re-referred to the Finance and Claims Committee. Without objection, so ordered.

### ANNOUNCEMENT OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Committee meetings were announced by the committee chairs.

Majority Leader Fitzpatrick moved the Senate recess until 6:50 p.m. at which time the Senate will move to the House chamber to meet in joint session with the House of Representatives to hear the Governor's State of the State address. Following the address, the Senate will adjourn until 1:00 p.m., 1/26/2023, the 19th legislative day. Motion carried.

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The text of the Governor's State of the State Address is included in this Journal, beginning on the following page.

Senate recessed at 2:57 p.m.

MARILYN MILLER  
Secretary of the Senate

JASON ELLSWORTH  
President of the Senate

**STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS BY GOVERNOR GREG GIANFORTE  
January 25, 2023**

Lieutenant Governor, Mister President, Mister Speaker, members of the 68th Legislature, fellow statewide officials, tribal leaders, members of the judiciary, members of our Cabinet, the First Lady of Montana, my dear wife Susan, and finally, my fellow Montanans.

Serving you, the people of Montana, as your twenty-fifth governor is the greatest honor of my life. Thank you for the confidence you've placed in me.

In my last state of the state, I told Montanans we owe it to them to be bold as we lead the Montana comeback. We laid out an ambitious agenda with our sights set on building a place where more Montanans are realizing the American dream, working hard, earning a good living, and raising their family. I'm proud to report we are succeeding in that mission.

But we know our journey is far from over. We still face challenges, but with each challenge comes an opportunity; an opportunity to grow together and grow stronger.

For too long, Montana hasn't been living up to our full, outstanding potential. Our biggest exports have been our beef, grain, and, tragically, our kids and grandkids. We've seen jobs and opportunities grow in other states, while they haven't here. As a result, our kids and grandkids have left the place they love and the people they love for better jobs, higher pay, and greater opportunities elsewhere. Too many choose to leave, but they shouldn't have to face that choice.

Over the past two years, we've made it easier for Montanans to stay and some have come back home. I meet them, and other inspiring Montanans, when I'm on the road. Each year, I visit all 56 counties. It's a priority for me. Getting out of the Helena bubble and sitting down with Montanans is the only way I know to do this job.

Montanans want greater opportunity, good-paying jobs, tax relief, the best education possible for their kids, affordable, accessible, high-quality health care, safe communities, attainable housing, stronger families, and responsive, effective government.

I share their priorities. We must deliver on them. Montanans are counting on us. Let's get it done.

Our key focus has always been, and remains, creating greater opportunity for more Montanans and protecting our Montana way of life. Together, we're opening the doors of greater opportunity so more folks can prosper and achieve the American dream. We're unleashing the engine of economic growth, business development, and job creation that, for too long, sputtered.

In 2021, Montana's economy grew at the seventh fastest pace in the nation. Thanks to the hard work of Montanans, we saw record business creation in 2021 and then again in 2022. Together, we've created more than 31,000 new jobs. 31,000 new jobs. Never before have this many jobs been created in two years.

We've hit record-low unemployment. Working with the legislature in 2021, we delivered one of the largest tax cuts in Montana history. We reformed and simplified our tax code to help small



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businesses, family farms, and family ranches thrive. And as a result, more Montanans are working today than ever before.

Friends, the state of our state is strong, much stronger than it was two years ago. As much as our tax cuts and reforms help hardworking Montanans, we recognize our state's regulatory scheme is a wet blanket on job creation and business development. That's why on my second day in office, I created the Red Tape Relief Task Force. Led by Lieutenant Governor Juras, they've left no stone unturned.

Ladies and gentlemen, our Lieutenant Governor doesn't just cut ribbons – she cuts red tape. Lieutenant Governor, thank you for your partnership in leading the Montana Comeback. The results of the lieutenant governor's work are clear. Right now, there are more than 160 red tape relief bills. Many have already passed the House or Senate. To our legislative partners, thank you for helping more Montanans prosper by removing unnecessary, burdensome regulations.

Montanans have spoken loud and clear: they want a government that works for them. Not the other way around. That's why better serving our customers, the people of Montana, is a top priority. We're putting customer service first and changing the way state government does business. We're listening to our bosses, the citizens of Montana. We're fixing what doesn't work.

We're modernizing state government. We're streamlining permitting. In July 2020, the Department of Environmental Quality was receiving a record number of requests for subdivision permits, and the requests kept coming. The department faced a backlog of nearly 500 overdue applications. This prevented builders and developers from doing their job. So, Director Chris Dorrington quickly changed the way DEQ operated. And in just months, they eliminated the backlog entirely, subdivision permits are being issued on time, and homes are being built.

We're also being better stewards of taxpayer dollars, making government more efficient. The Department of Labor and Industry developed a new, improved unemployment benefits system, saving taxpayers over \$35 million and better serving people who lost their job. The Department of Administration renegotiated our state health plan, saving taxpayers \$28 million per year while improving benefits.

And with our historic surplus, we're going to make Montana debt-free in '23. We'll pay off all general obligation debt, and we'll save \$40 million over the next two years. I urge you to make Montana debt-free in '23 and save Montanans \$40 million. Get the bill to my desk. These are real efficiencies, real improvements, real savings, all to better serve the people of Montana.

As we lead Montana's comeback, we're creating an environment where businesses can thrive, create more good-paying jobs, and increase opportunities for all Montanans.

And don't just take it from me. Take it from companies like Hyundai that decided to come to Montana and invest in our people, creating 50 Montana jobs. Or NextEra Energy, supporting our all-of-the-above energy approach and creating 300 Montana jobs. Or Tonix Pharmaceuticals, adding to a growing hotspot of cutting-edge employers in the Bitterroot, creating 120 Montana jobs. All told, over the last two years, 15 innovative businesses have come to Montana and are creating more than 900 good-paying Montana jobs.

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These companies see Montana's clear value; they see Montanans' unparalleled work ethic and our pro-business, pro-jobs policies. There's no doubt about it, Montana is open for business. We've made Montana more attractive to innovative job creators, and they're investing in our state and our people.

But we have a long way to go. Friends, we're just getting started. We're going to keep making Montana a sanctuary for freedom and free enterprise. Together, we will make Montana an even better place to live, work, raise a family, and achieve the American Dream. Because that's what Montanans sent us here to do, to focus on their priorities.

As I meet with Montanans in every corner of our state, I hear loud and clear: tax relief is a priority. That's why we're cutting taxes again this session. Working with the Legislature, we're moving forward with the largest tax cut in state history.

With inflation taking a bite out of every Montana family budget, from gas to groceries, providing meaningful tax relief is critical. That's why we're going to cut your taxes by over one billion dollars.

All of our tax proposals are rooted in a simple philosophy: hardworking Montanans should keep more of what they earn, because ultimately, it isn't the government's money. It's the money of hardworking Montanans who earn it. That's why we're going to put money back in Montanans' pockets, through immediate rebates and permanent, long-term tax relief.

The fact of the matter is Montanans overpaid their taxes, and we're going to give it back. Our plan delivers Montana's largest income tax cut ever. Our plan provides relief to Montana taxpayers at every income level, because even after our historic tax cuts in 2021, we still have the highest income tax rate in the Rocky Mountain West and one of the highest in the nation.

It's a drag on our economy, a disincentive for job creation, and a burden on Montana families. Other states understand this and are cutting their income tax rates. To stay competitive, we must do the same. We must permanently cut the tax rate most Montanans pay and encourage Montanans to get back into the workforce.

As I travel our state, I see "help wanted" signs on every Main Street. It's why we proudly led the way as the first state in the nation to end federal supplemental unemployment benefits in 2021. And it's why we're expanding the earned income tax credit to help lower-income working Montanans, incentivize work, and build a stronger workforce.

I want to take a minute to thank Senator Becky Beard who introduced legislation to cut income taxes for Montana taxpayers at every income level. And I want to thank Representative Tom Welch for bringing legislation to provide Montana homeowners with meaningful property tax relief.

While the state receives only a small fraction of property taxes, we believe Montanans deserve substantial property tax relief. Like the retired couple in the Flathead who, because they can't afford their rising property taxes, are thinking about selling the home they raised their kids in. We must provide them significant property tax relief so they can stay in their home and community.

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We must also make it easier for small business owners, family farmers, and family ranchers to thrive by further reforming the business equipment tax. For too long, owning the equipment needed to operate has come with a heavy, and unnecessary, tax burden. That's why we tripled the business equipment tax exemption in 2021. And it's why we're working with the legislature this year, to raise the business equipment tax exemption to \$1 million for every small business in Montana.

Taken together, we'll eliminate this tax burden for more than 5,000 small businesses. I want to thank Representative Josh Kassmier for leading this charge in 2021 and again this year. Working together, we're providing the largest tax cut in state history, creating greater opportunities for Montanans to prosper, thrive, and achieve the American dream.

We must also ensure our kids receive the best education possible. Too often throughout our country, we've seen education bureaucrats fighting to keep parents out of their kid's education. Let's be clear, government should never stand between parents and their kid's education. Let's empower Montana parents to choose what's best for their family and their kids. Let's protect parents' rights. I urge you to send me Majority Leader Sue Vinton's bill that ensures students and parents are put first in education.

Every parent knows each child is unique. Let's ensure each child's education best meets his or her individual needs. Let's support individualized learning, allowing students to progress at their own pace, regardless of their age or class. Let's pass the Individualized Education Act, sponsored by Senator Shannon O'Brien. Let's also support work-based learning, allowing students to get on-the-job experience and apply that experience to their high school graduation requirements.

Friends, we can't continue doing the same thing over and over again and expect different results. We need to bring more innovation to education. We need fresh, new thinking and bold leaders to deliver the best education possible for our kids.

Ron Slinger, the president of Miles Community College, is doing that, and he's with us tonight. Miles Community College is equipping Montanans with the skills they need to thrive in good-paying, in-demand careers – from truck drivers to meat cutters to certified nursing assistants. The college has also developed partnerships with the private sector, including Stockman Bank and Sidney Health Center, to create business-specific micro-credentials. Miles Community College is breaking the traditional mold. They're transforming how education is delivered. They're thinking outside the box, not confining themselves, or their students, to the limits of the college's brick and mortar. And under Ron's leadership, they're delivering results. Because of their innovation, Miles Community College's full-time enrollment has grown at three times the rate of the entire Montana University System just in the last year.

Ron, will you please stand up? Ron, thank you for your innovative work on behalf of Montana students.

My challenge tonight to education leaders at every college, every university, and every school district in the state? Follow Ron's lead, be innovative, be transformative, develop partnerships with the private sector, don't be constrained by brick and mortar, and improve education opportunities for all our students.

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We can also transform how we deliver traditional K-12 education. Imagine a student who lives in rural Montana. She excels at math, but her school doesn't offer advanced calculus or other STEM courses. Wouldn't she benefit from taking calculus online?

Geographic boundaries are no longer a constraint. We must modernize our way of thinking about education beyond traditional geographic barriers. We can do that through Representative Llew Jones' bill to transform the Montana Digital Academy. I ask you to pass this bill and get it to my desk. Let's double the cap on the Big Sky Scholarship to expand parental choice in K-12 education.

Let's do all this, and let's also take better care of those who help our kids reach their full potential – Montana teachers. Teaching is a calling; I know, my mom was a math teacher, and now my daughter is as well.

For too long, teachers who answer the call and start their careers here haven't earned enough. That's why we enacted the TEACH Act in 2021, to provide incentives for school districts to increase starting teacher pay, and it's working. In its first year, the TEACH Act has helped nearly 500 new teachers begin their career in Montana.

Kylee Urie is one of those young teachers, and she's with us tonight. Kylee is in her second year at Harlem High School, where she teaches agriculture and coaches cheerleading. She told me she found her life's calling in teaching. Her husband, Nathan, teaches agriculture and coaches wrestling at Turner Public School. They knew they wanted to start their careers teaching ag in rural Montana, but it didn't add up financially, with the state's low starting teacher pay. Thankfully the TEACH Act made a big difference. Kylee told me the boost from the TEACH Act was her deciding factor in moving to Harlem to teach. Thanks to the TEACH Act, we have Kylee and Nathan, two new young teachers educating our students. They're making our future a little brighter each day. Kylee and Nathan, thank you for your dedication to our kids and Montana's future.

Friends, a four-year college degree is not the best option for everyone. Many new good-paying jobs require specialized skills – skills developed through apprenticeship. When we took office two years ago, government regulations blocked access to apprenticeships. So, we modernized our apprenticeship system – quadrupling the number of apprenticeship opportunities in Montana, and we're seeing the results. In 2022, Montana added more than 1,000 apprenticeships and more new employer sponsors to our Registered Apprenticeship Program. We have more apprentices now than ever before.

Williams Plumbing in Bozeman is one of our employer sponsors. Quin Williams, the company president, and Cooper Austin, an employee of Williams Plumbing, are with us tonight. Quin told me that, before our reform, the company had only 35 available apprentice positions. With the help of our reform, Williams Plumbing created 200 apprentice positions for hardworking Montanans; for folks like Cooper, who earned his apprenticeship as a direct result of our regulatory change.

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After Cooper graduated high school, he tried college and realized it wasn't the right path for him. He enlisted in the Marine Corps, was stationed in California and Missouri, and remains active in the Reserves unit in Billings. Cooper, thank you for your service to our state and nation.

Cooper was looking for a good-paying career, and a close family friend suggested he find one in the trades, and that's how he ended up at Williams Plumbing. Cooper tells me that he's learned a lot as an apprentice and loves the work. Cooper and Quin, thank you for making Montana a better place.

Now more than ever, Montana needs plumbers and carpenters – electricians and welders – masons and machinists. Now more than ever, Montana needs a highly skilled workforce – which is why we created the Montana Trades Education Credit in 2021. As we anticipated, Montana employers are taking advantage of the credit to upskill our workforce. And this year, our budget nearly doubles the Montana Trades Education Credit – boosting this successful program that builds the skills of hardworking Montanans.

As much as we need to open opportunities for trades education, we also need to grow our health care workforce. Let's tear down barriers for health care professionals to practice in Montana. Send Representative Amy Regier's bill to join the APRN Compact to my desk – as well as Representative Bill Mercer's that improves professional and occupational licensing. Taken together, these measures will build a more robust provider network in Montana and ultimately increase Montanans' access to health care.

In 2021, we brought greater competition to the marketplace and more choice to consumers by authorizing direct patient care agreements. With unanimous, bipartisan support, we expanded telehealth, increasing access to high-quality care throughout all corners of our state. Let's build on that progress this session.

If we want nurses, law enforcement officers, and teachers to live in the communities they serve – we must also address the shortage of affordable, attainable housing throughout our state. Home ownership is foundational to the American dream, but home ownership has become harder to achieve in the last decade. Hardworking Montanans should be able to live in the communities where they work, and grandparents should be able to live closer to their kids and grandkids.

Last year, I brought together a diverse, bipartisan Housing Task Force. I want to thank Senator Greg Hertz, Senator Ellie Boldman, Representative Sue Vinton, former Representative Danny Tenenbaum, agency directors, and stakeholders for their leadership. I made their mission clear: help make owning or renting a home an affordable reality again for more Montanans. They delivered many strategies to increase the supply of affordable, attainable housing.

As an example, we adopted one of the task force's strategies in our budget, the HOMES Program, or Home Ownership Means Economic Security. The HOMES Program invests \$200 million to expand water and sewer infrastructure, and ultimately expand housing capacity throughout our state. I want to thank Representative Mike Hopkins and Senator Forrest Mandeville for leading this effort. I ask you to pass the HOMES Program. Get it to my desk so we can increase the supply of housing – and get more Montanans into a home of their own.

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To increase the supply of affordable, attainable housing, we also need infrastructure in place. It's why, in addition to historic investments in water and sewer, we've proposed an additional \$100 million to repair our roads and bridges. And like access to water and sewer systems as well as safer roads and bridges, Montanans' access to broadband is essential in the 21st century. Lack of access to reliable broadband limits Montanans' access to educational opportunities, health care, and career opportunities. That's why we made the largest-ever investment in broadband infrastructure – which will bring reliable broadband to 62,000 Montana homes that don't have it now.

As we create better opportunities for Montanans, we must also protect our way of life. Above all, that means protecting life. Our Declaration of Independence states, we are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. Without life, there can be no liberty, and no pursuit of happiness. All life is precious and must be protected. Last session, we passed commonsense pro-life bills, some of which are now tied up in the courts, but our commitment to doing what's right for unborn babies will never waver.

As we stand firm for life, we must also ensure all Montana kids, from unborn babies to teenagers, have the opportunity to reach their full God-given potential. Our kids, and Montana's future, depend on strong families, and we must help them prosper. But inflation, rising prices, and increasing child care costs continue to be a heavy burden for working families with young kids. To support them, we're proposing a \$1,200 child tax credit for kids under six. \$1,200 is meaningful for parents. It'll make a real difference for growing families raising their kids here in Montana. Representative Josh Kassmier is carrying the bill to provide this assistance for Montana families. Let's get it done.

And speaking of child care, let's make it more accessible and affordable. For too long, working families have faced a shortage. This problem was only made worse by the pandemic, here and throughout the country. It's why we've invested over \$100 million to help stabilize child care in Montana. It's also why we're eliminating unnecessary barriers to child care, so we can better serve our kids and provide them with the foundation for a better future.

We must also make it easier for Montanans to open their happy, healthy, loving homes to children. Every child deserves a home where they can reach their full potential. To get more children into permanent, loving homes, we're proposing an adoption tax credit of \$5,000, and if you adopt a kid in our foster care system, we'll bump that credit to \$7,500. We heard inspiring testimonies yesterday from parents who opened their homes and adopted kids. I appreciate Representative Courtenay Sprunger who's leading this effort.

And I'm thankful for groups working each day to get every child into a permanent, loving home. Groups like Child Bridge. Launched by the late Steve Bryan and his wife Mary, Child Bridge advocates for abused and neglected children, and helps foster children find homes filled with love and support. Because of Steve's vision, thousands of Montana children have a bright future with a loving family. What started as a local organization in Bigfork, Child Bridge is now involved in nearly two-thirds of all non-kinship placements throughout Montana. This is the power of the public sector working together with the private sector. Child Bridge's Executive Director Jenna Taylor is here with us tonight. Jenna, on behalf of a grateful state, thank you. And thank you to the entire Child Bridge team. You provide hope to generations of children.



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To continue building bridges among Montana's public, nonprofit, and private sectors – under my direction, the Department of Public Health and Human Services launched the Office of Faith and Community Based Services. This office is helping bring people together to build better outcomes for our families and children.

As we know too well, drug addiction and violent crime threaten our families, our communities, and our Montana way of life. I've heard it in almost every community throughout our state, including at the public safety roundtables I held last year.

With chemicals largely from China, Mexican drug cartels mass-produce fentanyl. Then, they bring it into our country, often over our southern border. This fentanyl crisis is a direct consequence of our nation's insecure and porous southern border. So tonight, I have a message for President Biden and members of Congress: secure our southern border now. Stop neglecting it. Secure it. The safety of our communities, our families, and our people depends on it.

Crime and addiction too often go hand-in-hand, with tragic results. Addiction and substance use tear families apart, too often leaving family members grieving for a loved one they've lost. Addressing crime and addiction effectively will take partnerships and investments.

To hold criminals accountable, we propose to invest \$200 million to repair and expand capacity at the state prison in Deer Lodge. I want to take a minute to thank Representative Mike Hopkins and Representative John Fitzpatrick for leading this effort. To make our communities safer, I ask you to pass that funding and get it to my desk.

Working with the attorney general, we also propose investing in law enforcement. Our budget funds 16 new highway patrol troopers and criminal investigators. We also propose funding six new prosecutors at the Montana Department of Justice. Taken together, they will combat the scourge of drug trafficking, human trafficking, narcotics, major crimes, and crimes against children.

The brave men and women of law enforcement put their lives on the line each and every day. They deserve our support. I speak for all Montanans when I say: we see you, we appreciate you, and we back the blue.

While we crack down on criminals peddling dangerous drugs, we're also focused on expanding access to treatment and recovery for Montanans struggling with addiction.

The Angel Initiative is one way we're doing that. Launched by our administration, the Angel Initiative allows folks struggling with addiction to visit any participating law enforcement office, ask for help, and get connected to treatment.

I'm proud to have Cascade County Sheriff Jesse Slaughter with us here tonight. Sheriff Slaughter is dedicated to making our communities safer. He was also our first Angel Initiative partner. Thank you, Sheriff Slaughter.

We're proud to have more than 20 sheriffs throughout the state partnering with us on the Angel Initiative. We'll keep adding more, but our work doesn't stop there.

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In January 2021, we introduced the HEART Fund. It funds a full continuum of substance abuse prevention and treatment programs for communities. The HEART Fund helps people regain their health, rebuild their lives, and become vibrant, productive members of society. To be clear, it's not bigger government. It's a community grant program to help nonprofits and NGOs do the work on the ground, in their communities. And I'm proud our Budget for Montana Families expands on our historic progress, boosting the HEART Fund by 50 percent.

Our budget also permanently funds eight, proven, effective drug courts throughout our state that are losing federal funding. Instead of turning our backs on those struggling with addiction – we're investing in hope and opportunity as they get clean, sober, and healthy.

We also have an obligation to take care of the most vulnerable among us. After decades of previous administrations applying Band-Aids and kicking the can down the road, we propose a generational investment in our behavioral health care facilities. With it, we'll repair the state hospital in Warm Springs, we'll improve patient services, and we'll better secure the safety of patients and providers. We'll also support expanded community-based behavioral health clinics. Friends, the time for kicking the can down the road is over.

I appreciate the leadership of Representative Bob Keenan, Representative Ed Stafman, Representative Mary Caferro, Senator John Esp, and the interim committee that worked with Director Brereton. I ask you to pass this critical investment for the good of our families, our communities, and the most vulnerable among us. Get this critical investment to my desk.

We also continue to face the heartbreaking crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons. This is an all-hands-on-deck moment. I want to recognize Representative Sharon Stewart Peregoy for giving a voice to the voiceless, for continuing to carry the torch that lights our way. Tonight, I ask all of you to send her bill to protect our Native neighbors to my desk.

Part of our Montana way of life is defined by our rich outdoor heritage and vast public lands. We must protect them for the generations who will follow us.

Active management will protect our forests. When a forest is managed properly, we have less severe wildfires, more recreational opportunities, more wildlife habitat, and more jobs. In 2021, we set an ambitious forestry target to match the urgency of the forest health crisis we face. Thanks to the leadership of Director Amanda Kaster and the hard work of the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, we more than doubled the number of forested acres treated. Our budget proposes \$10 million per year to expand the scope of active forest management, so we have fewer wildfires in the first place. For the wellbeing of our people, their homes, their property, and their livelihoods, I urge you to pass our active forest management proposal.

And as we better manage our lands, we're also increasing access to them. Take our work in the Big Snowies, for example. The state purchased nearly 5,700 acres in the area, providing access to over 100,000 total acres of state and federal lands. This conservation victory created the Big Snowy Mountains Wildlife Management Area. Not only does this land offer exceptional hunting – with excellent habitat and access to the Big Snowies elk herd – but also it will remain open for cattle grazing.



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Our state has a vested interest in seeing land conserved for wildlife, while also keeping ranchers on the landscape. Production ag and conservation are not mutually exclusive. We married those two interests in this agreement, and achieved a win-win for Montana, offering a great example of what we can accomplish together. It's a testament to the fact that we're best when we're working together. Let's keep that in mind as we move through this legislative session and the years ahead. Let's remember that there's much, much more that brings us together than separates us. Let's continue finding common ground and delivering results for the people of Montana; that's what they sent us here to do.

Ultimately, we all want the same thing: to open the doors of greater opportunity so more Montanans can thrive, prosper, and achieve the American dream. Let's work every day to make that a reality, because every day, Montanans work hard to realize the American dream, to earn a decent living, to own a home, to raise a family, to contribute to their communities, to retire comfortably, to leave their kids and grandkids a better life than they've had.

While the American Dream might be fleeting in some states, it's alive and well here in Montana, because we embrace the freedoms that are foundational to who we are as Americans. We support all those who want a better life and are willing to work for it. We stand with the parents doing everything they can to give their kids a better life. We celebrate our shared values of hard work, commitment to family, freedom, and love of country. We embrace the fundamental idea that the American Dream is a sacred one, and together, we'll always defend it.

Friends, our best days are ahead of us, and the better, brighter future we're building together, one we'll leave to our kids and grandkids, that inspires me every day.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless America. And God bless the great state of Montana.

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