

## **Summary of Energy and Telecommunications Legislation 2015 Legislative Session**

The 2015 Legislature acted on a number of bills involving energy policy, utility regulation, and taxation related to energy projects. This summary provides an overview of major legislation, excluding the budget provisions of House Bill 2, in the following areas:

PSC Bill	Telecommunications
Utilities and Cooperatives	Taxation and Funding (Energy)
Coal, Oil and Pipelines	Energy Building Requirements

The summary focuses only on legislation approved by the Legislature that has become law.

### **Public Service Commission Bills (PSC)**

During the 2013-2014 interim, the Energy and Telecommunications Interim Committee (ETIC) approved the drafting of five pieces of legislation at the request of the Public Service Commission. Three of the five bills were passed and approved by the 2015 Legislature.

#### **✓HB 61**

Updates railroad laws to comply with federal preemption of state regulation of railroads. The bill repealed and amended various sections of Title 69, Chapter 14 to eliminate statutory provisions that are obsolete or no longer applicable due to federal preemption.

#### **✓SB 10**

Exempts natural gas utilities with fewer than 200 customers from the natural gas universal systems benefits program.

#### **✓SB 11**

Exempts electric utilities with fewer than 50 customers from the universal systems benefits program.

### **Utilities and Cooperatives**

#### **✓SB 327**

Establishes a 270-day deadline for the Public Service Commission to issue an order for rate schedules for the purchase of electricity from a qualifying small power production facility.

#### **✓SB 150**

Increases the amount of universal system benefits funds used by a public utility for low-income energy and weatherization assistance. It also clarifies that internal USB programs and activities include providing low-income energy and weatherization assistance on Indian reservations.

#### **✓SB 312**

Clarifies large customer USB reporting requirements and established penalties for utilities and large customers that fail to file universal system benefits report. The ETIC's statutory duties also were expanded to include further review of large customer reports.

## **Coal, Oil, and Pipelines**

### **✓SB 368**

Requires that certain pipeline information be collected by the Department of Environmental Quality and made available on a website.

### **✓SB 102**

Allows the Department of Environmental Quality to collect and use registration fees for the administration of air quality permitting and registration.

**✓SB 261** creates the Montana Greater Sage-grouse Stewardship Act, establishes an oversight team and a sage grouse stewardship account, from which the team may authorize and the DNRC may award grants to maintain, enhance, restore, expand, or benefit sage grouse habitat or populations. Authorizes the creation of a habitat quantification tool to calculate credits generated by projects used as compensatory mitigation to offset debits resulting from certain development.

## **Telecommunications**

### **✓HB 112**

Extends the sunset on wireless 9-1-1 funding for less-populated counties.

### **\*✓HB 10**

Appropriates money for information technology capital projects. The money is for statewide projects and projects in the Department of Transportation, Department of Administration, and the Judicial Branch. \*Includes line-item veto.

## **Taxation and Funding (Energy)**

### **✓SB 111**

Clarifies that an owner or operator of a wind generation facility is subject to certain impact fees each year for the first 3 years after construction of the facility.

### **✓HB 252**

Eliminates the requirement that research and commercialization account funds be spent for research into clean coal and renewable resources.

### **✓HB 421**

Extends the termination date of the coal washing credit by 8 years.

### **✓HB 411**

Revises the price of a barrel of crude oil in relation to the imposition of production tax rates.

## **Energy Building Requirements**

### **✓SB 249**

Revises energy performance contracts and establishes criteria for the Department of Environmental Quality to use in the administration of an energy performance contract program. Criteria for qualified energy service providers are also established and criteria for governmental entities to use for energy performance contracts are also outlined.

### **✓HB 464**

Establishes voluntary high-performance building standards for existing buildings in state agencies and the university system. Establishes reporting to the ETIC on the program.

CI0140 5131slxc.