



ENERGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS INTERIM COMMITTEE

68th Montana Legislature

SENATE MEMBERS

Brad Molnar
Christopher Pope
Barry Usher
Daniel Zolnikov

HOUSE MEMBERS

Laurie Bishop
Steven Galloway
Gary Parry
Katie Zolnikov

COMMITTEE STAFF

Trevor Graff - Research Analyst
Jacelyn Sterling - Secretary
Jameson Walker - Attorney

MINUTES LOG

March 15, 2024

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Helena, Montana

Please note: This document is a Minutes Log and provides annotation of the time elapsed between the beginning of the meeting and the time at which the item was presented or discussed, a motion was made, or a vote was taken. The narrative presented here is provided only as a guide to the audio or video recording of the meeting. The official discussion, motion, or vote is available on the audio or video archive of this meeting. The Legislature does not prepare a transcript of the meeting activities. The time designation may be used to locate the referenced discussion on the audio or video recording of this meeting.

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MEMBERS PRESENT:

Rep. Katie Zolnikov, Chair (R)
Sen. Christopher Pope, Vice Chair (D)
Rep. Laurie Bishop (D)
Rep. Steven Galloway (R) on zoom
Sen. Brad Molnar (R)
Rep. Gary Parry (R)
Sen. Barry Usher (R)
Sen. Daniel Zolnikov (R)

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT:

Griffin Burns, Research Analyst
Jacelyn Sterling, Secretary
Jameson Walker, Attorney

AGENDA ([Attachment 1](#))

VISITORS' LIST ([Attachment 2](#))

COMMITTEE ACTION

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

09:33:29 Presiding Officer Zolnikov, called the meeting to order at 9:47 AM. The committee secretary took roll.

Discussion

09:34:02 Presiding Officer Zolnikov

POWER RESERVE UPDATE

09:34:29 Jason Mohr

09:36:14 Mark Lambrecht, Director Government Relations, Montanan Electric Cooperatives Association

Public Comment

09:40:34 Abby Briggerman, Holland Heart, Large Customer Group

Committee Questions, Discussion

09:42:44 Sen. Pope

09:44:04 Mark Lambrecht

09:45:01 Sen. Usher

09:46:40 Mark Lambrecht

09:47:17 Doug Hardy, Montana Electric Cooperatives Association

09:49:10 Sen. Usher

09:49:46 Doug Hardy

ENERGY REGIONALIZATION: MONTANA UTILITY ENERGY CONTRACTS

09:53:07 Jason Mohr

09:54:17 Joe Stimatz, Director, Energy Supply Market Operations, NorthWestern Energy (NWE)

[EXHIBIT1](#)

Public Comment

10:12:31 Doug Hardy, Montana Electric Cooperatives Association

Committee Questions, Discussion

10:13:35 Rep. Laurie Bishop

10:17:00 Joe Stimatz, NWE

10:19:38 Sen. Daniel Zolnikov

10:23:29 Joe Stimatz

10:25:08 Sen. Daniel Zolnikov

10:25:23 Rep. Steven Galloway

10:26:20 Joe Stimatz
10:27:07 Rep. Steven Galloway
10:27:14 Sen. Barry Usher
10:30:27 Joe Stimatz
10:30:53 Sen. Barry Usher
10:30:59 Joe Stimatz
10:31:13 Sen. Daniel Zolnikov
10:34:31 Joe Stimatz
10:34:46 Rep. Laurie Bishop
10:37:56 Joe Stimatz
10:39:10 Sen. Barry Usher
10:39:30 Joe Stimatz
10:39:48 Vice Presiding Officer Christopher Pope
10:47:42 Joe Stimatz

GEOTHERMAL RESEARCH UPDATE (90-3-1301, MCA)

10:49:06 Jason Mohr
10:49:42 John Metesh, Director, Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology (MBMG)
[EXHIBIT2](#)

Public Comment

None

Committee Questions/Discussion

11:12:32 Rep. Gary Parry
11:18:41 John Metesh
11:19:12 Sen. Brad Molnar
11:19:53 John Metesh
11:20:51 Vice Presiding Officer Christopher Pope
11:27:23 John Metesh
11:27:51 Rep. Gary Parry
11:28:27 John Metesh

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL UPDATE

11:29:31 Jason Mohr

Committee Questions/Discussion

None

RECESS

11:34:32

RECONVENED

12:57:10

TRANSMISSION LINE TREATMENT AND WILDFIRE LIABILITY

12:57:38 Jason Mohr

12:58:25 Zev Hunting, US Forest Service

[EXHIBIT3](#)

13:10:50 John Hines, Vice President, Energy Supplies Government Affairs, NorthWestern Energy (NWE)

13:24:58 Jason Merkle, NWE

[EXHIBIT4](#)

13:48:21 John Hines

See EXHIBIT4

Public Comment

13:52:15 Mark Lambercht, Montanan Electric Cooperatives Association

13:54:31 Aimee Grmoljez, Montana Dakota Utilities

Committee Questions/Discussion

13:55:31 Sen. Barry Usher

13:58:00 John Hines

13:59:29 Rep. Laurie Bishop

14:00:32 Zev Hunting, USFS

14:01:43 Rep. Laurie Bishop

14:02:03 Zev Hunting

14:02:35 Rep. Laurie Bishop

14:07:12 John Hines

14:10:41 Rep. Laurie Bishop

14:11:47 Sen. Brad Molnar

14:12:14 John Hines

14:12:28 Jason Merkel

14:14:42 Sen. Brad Molnar

14:16:01 Jason Merkel

14:16:36 Vice Presiding Officer Christopher Pope

14:19:41 Jason Merkel

14:22:54 John Hines

14:26:52 Vice Presiding Officer Christopher Pope

14:27:38 John Hines

14:28:51 Vice Presiding Officer Christopher Pope

14:29:57 John Hines

14:32:00 Sen. Barry Usher

14:33:11 John Hines
14:34:25 Sen. Barry Usher
14:36:09 John Hines
14:36:27 Rep. Steven Galloway
14:38:28 John Hines
14:39:15 Rep. Steven Galloway
14:39:32 John Hines
14:41:32 Sen. Barry Usher
14:42:08 Griffin Burns

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OVERVIEW

14:43:29 Jennifer Fielder, Commissioner, Public Service Commission (PSC)
[EXHIBT5](#)
[EXHIBT6](#)
[EXHIBIT7](#)
[EXHIBIT8](#)
[EXHIBIT9](#)

Public Comment on Public Service Commission Overview

14:57:58 Nick Fitzmaurice, Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC)

Committee Questions/Discussion

14:59:33 Sen. Barry Usher
15:05:07 Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC
15:05:24 Vice Presiding Officer Christopher Pope
15:08:23 Rep. Gary Parry
15:09:12 Nick Fitzmaurice
15:10:37 Sen. Daniel Zolnikov
15:13:24 Jennifer Fielder, PSC
15:16:07 Presiding Officer Katie Zolnikov
15:16:20 Jennifer Fielder
15:18:42 Sen. Daniel Zolnikov
15:19:36 Jennifer Fielder
15:21:05 Vice Presiding Officer Christopher Pope
15:26:00 Jennifer Fielder
15:27:03 Vice Presiding Officer Christopher Pope
15:27:24 Jennifer Fielder
15:28:01 Sen. Barry Usher
15:28:17 Jennifer Fielder
15:29:10 Sen. Daniel Zolnikov

15:29:52 Sen. Barry Usher
15:30:18 Rep. Gary Parry
15:31:42 Sen. Daniel Zolnikov
15:34:20 Sen. Barry Usher
15:34:32 Rep. Laurie Bishop

RAILWAY INSPECTION DRAFT LANGUAGE

15:35:19 Jason Mohr
[EXHIBIT10](#)

15:36:52 Sen. Barry Usher
15:38:06 Vice Presiding Officer Christopher Pope
15:38:29 Presiding Officer Katie Zolnikov
15:39:05 Jason Mohr
15:39:20 Presiding Officer Katie Zolnikov
15:39:35 Rep. Steven Galloway
15:39:54 Sen. Barry Usher
15:40:02 Rep. Steven Galloway
15:40:11 Presiding Officer Katie Zolnikov

Public Comment

15:40:27 Jennifer Fielder, Vice President, PSC
15:41:56 Vice Presiding Officer Christopher Pope

MOTION/VOTE

15:42:23 Sen. Usher moved to accept proposed bill draft language including spelling corrections noted by committee.
Vote: Carried unanimously by voice vote, Sen. Molnar was absent.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON MATTERS WITHIN THE JURISDICTION OF THE ETIC

None

Other Business, Instructions to Staff

15:44:37 Rep. Gary Parry
15:45:20 Sen. Barry Usher
15:45:21 Sen. Molnar
15:45:50 Jameson Walker
15:46:30 Sen. Brad Molnar
15:47:15 Sen. Barry Usher
15:47:21 Chair Katie Zolnikov

15:48:01 Sen. Brad Molnar
15:48:17 Sen. Barry Usher
15:48:39 Sen. Brad Molnar
15:48:56 Sen. Barry Usher
15:49:00 Rep. Laurie Bishop
15:49:15 Jason Mohr
15:49:35 Presiding Officer Katie Zolnikov

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 15:49:53