

**City of Billings**  
**2015 Montana Legislative Priorities**

**DRAFT**  
**November 17, 2014**

~~DRAFT: Prepared for discussion with City Council:~~

**Finance & Taxation**

As has become customary, the State General Fund Budget will be THE issue for the 2015 Legislature. In past Sessions, local governments have helped the State balance its budgets. Hopefully, the Legislature will recognize those efforts and will assist local governments improve their financial conditions. The City of Billings will support bills which provide financial support to local governments and oppose Legislative attempts to decrease shared revenues or transfer costs to local governments.

- Local Impact Tax Option Authority: The Montana League of Cities & Towns is expected to lead an effort for a voter approved local option taxation authority on specific services and items, with some property tax relief; City of Billings will support these efforts.
- Property Tax Reappraisal: Support a shorter reappraisal cycle; Support expedited resolution of tax appeals and revision of the tax appeal process.
- Entitlement Program Reimbursement: Support continuation of entitlement programs and funding under current law.
- Tax Increment Finance: Support this program as it currently exists; Oppose changes that reduce local control or impede district creation or administration.
- Oil, Gas and Coal Production Impacts: Support distribution of existing taxes and authority for new infrastructure improvements that help local governments deal with impacts of resource production; Support the Governor's \$45 million grant program for Eastern Montana needs
- Public Employee Pension Plans: Support amendments to modify administration and provisions of the 2013 pension laws.
- Early Edge Education: Monitor-Support Governor's \$35 million funding request for early childhood education and monitor other education proposals not directly impacting Local Governments.

**Local Government Powers**

The City of Billings strongly supports local control and self-governing powers and authorities. The City will resist legislative proposals and agency policies that would substitute state authority for local control.

- Increase Budget Reserve for Building Code Enforcement from 12 months to a 24 month reserve

## **Public Health, Safety & City Employee Relations**

The City of Billings values its employees and supports legislation that improves worker safety and protects the public.

- Medicaid Expansion: ~~Monitor~~ Support expansion of medical insurance to lower income citizens under bills which include reasonable reform measures.
- Workers Compensation: Support legislation that reduces rates while providing adequate medical care for injured workers; Oppose presumptive illnesses legislation.
- Mental Health: Support funding for mental health programs; Support involuntary civil commitment bill.
- Law Enforcement: Support Satellite Crime Lab to be located in Billings; Support bill prohibiting public intoxication; Oppose changes to forfeiture of property provisions under State ~~Drug~~ Laws.
- Seasonal Unemployment Insurance: Support legislation to exempt employers from unemployment insurance for seasonal employees

## **Land Use, Property & Environmental Regulation**

The City of Billings supports laws that protect the environment and our citizens' quality of life.

- Special District Laws: Oppose changes to Special District legislation which weaken existing laws and local authority.

## **Regional & Community Coalitions & Partnerships**

The City of Billings supports Legislation that enhances the ability of local governments to address concerns ~~that are shared among proposed and supported by local, regional,~~ private and public partners, either locally or statewide.

- Support, in general, Resolutions adopted by the Montana League of Cities and Towns.
- Support, in general, the Public Policies adopted by the Billings Area Chamber of Commerce.
- Support, in general, adequate funding for urban schools.
- Support the State Library Commission proposals that assist local governments with providing public library services.
- Continue to develop coalitions and partnerships with mutual interest parties including, Yellowstone County, the Billings Hospitals, MSU-B, Big Sky EDA, Billings Chamber of Commerce, and local School Districts.

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