

City of Billings

2017 Montana Legislative Priorities

Finance & Taxation

The State General Fund Budget will be THE issue for the 2017 legislature. Although the Budget is always the major issue of any Session, current and projected declining State revenues will spotlight this matter. In past Sessions, local governments have helped the State balance its budget, but cities and counties are also experiencing stagnant or declining revenues. The City of Billings will support bills that boost financial stability for local governments and oppose Legislative attempts to decrease revenues or transfer costs to local governments.

- Local government optional tax authority: Support legislation that allows all cities, towns and counties to ask their voters whether to adopt a local option or an expanded resort community tax that builds specific capital improvements, has a duration of 10 years or less and requires property tax relief.
- Entitlement Program Reimbursement: Support continuation of entitlement programs and funding under current law (HB 124, 2001 Legislative Session).
- Tax Increment Finance: Support this program as it currently exists; Oppose changes that reduce TIF district value or duration, including legislation to exempt the 95-mill school levy from the TIF calculation.
- Infrastructure Funding: Support funding for needed infrastructure for State and local governments, as proposed by Montana Infrastructure Coalition or the League of Cities and Towns.
- Gasoline Tax Increase: Support increasing the state gasoline tax, currently set at 27 cents per gallon (15-70-403), and increase fuel tax revenues distributed to local governments to provide additional funding for highways, roads and streets.
- Property Tax Appeals: Support expedited resolution of tax appeals and revision of the tax appeal process.

Local Government Powers

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

- Increase Building Code Reserve: Support increasing the Budget Reserve for Building Code Enforcement from 12 months to a 24-month funding reserve.
- Support legislation that protects 9-1-1 emergency communication fee distributions and begins planning for Next-Gen 9-1-1 services.

Public Health, Safety & City Employee Relations

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

- Workers Compensation: Support legislation that reduces rates while providing adequate medical care for injured workers; Oppose firefighter presumptive illnesses legislation.
- Law Enforcement: Support legislation authorizing local governments to adopt ordinances to address public incapacitation resulting from chronic substance abuse, including alcohol, emphasizing treatment and rehabilitation programs to provide long-term solutions; Support legislation to enact a primary seatbelt law in Montana.
- Mental Health: Support funding for community-based mental health programs.

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 that weaken existing laws and local authority.
- Property maintenance standards: Support legislation and Administrative Rules that permit local governments to adopt model codes that regulate health, safety, sanitary and aesthetic conditions in existing residential and commercial properties.

Regional & Community Coalitions & Partnerships

The City of Billings supports Legislation that enhances the ability of local governments to address shared concerns, locally or statewide, among private and public partners.

- 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 State proposals that assist local governments with providing public services.
- Continue to develop coalitions and partnerships with mutual interest parties including, Yellowstone County, Billings Hospitals, MSU-B, Big Sky EDA, Billings Area Chamber of Commerce, and local School Districts.

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