



MONTANA RENEWABLE ENERGY ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 673
Missoula, MT 59806
(406) 214-9405
www.montanarenewables.org

August 21, 2018

Energy and Telecommunications Interim Committee

PO BOX 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706

Regarding: LC IRP2 – Require utility to hold public meetings prior to submitting a plan

Chair McNally and Member of the Energy and Telecommunications Interim Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on LC IRP 2, requiring utilities to hold public meetings prior to submitting resource planning documents. As we have stated previously, MREA feels the planning process should be a fully open process that would allow for wide and diverse stakeholder input and greater access for members of the public. We support LC IRP 2, which is a step in the right direction.

Currently, NorthWestern Energy's resource planning meetings are closed-door and by invitation only. This stands in contrast to other major investor owned utilities in the region that hold open, public planning meetings. There have been concerns that open-door meetings would be unproductive, but this has not proven to be true. When a special public planning meeting was held earlier this year by the utility it was both well attended, with a diverse range of customers and energy experts in attendance, and thoroughly productive. Members of the public asked thoughtful questions and received thoughtful answers from utility staff. All parties acted respectfully and professionally, allowing a better shared understanding about all of the elements considered in a resource plan. This is a great example of the interactions and information sharing that LC IRP 2 would foster.

We encourage the committee members to support this draft legislation and continue to seek ways to further open the planning process.

Gratefully,

Andrew J. Valainis
Executive Director
Montana Renewable Energy Association