



ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY INTERIM COMMITTEE

69th Montana Legislature

SENATE MEMBERS

Gregg Hunter
Gayle Lammers
Christopher Pope
Daniel Zolnikov

HOUSE MEMBERS

Bob Carter
Becky Edwards
Gary Parry
Kerri Seekins-Crowe
Katie Zolnikov

COMMITTEE STAFF

Griffin Burns – Lead Staff
Jacelyn Sterling - Secretary
Julie Johnson – Legal Staff

MINUTES LOG

November 12, 2025
Capitol Room 317 and Zoom
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:

Sen. Daniel Zolnikov, Presiding Officer (R)
Rep. Becky Edwards, Vice Presiding Officer (D)
Rep. Bob Carter (D)
Sen. Gregg Hunter (R)
Sen. Gayle Lammers (R)
Rep. Gary Parry (R)
Sen. Christopher Pope (D)
Rep. Katie Zolnikov (R)

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe (R)

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT:

Griffin Burns, Lead Staff
Jacelyn Sterling, Secretary
Julie Johnson, Legal Staff

AGENDA ([Attachment 1](#))

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

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

09:02:41 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov called the meeting to order at 9:02 AM. The committee secretary took roll.

GOVERNOR'S ENERGY TASK FORCE UPDATE

09:03:40 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
09:03:59 Sonja Nowakowski, Director, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
09:04:51 Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe joined the meeting.
09:12:02 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
09:12:53 Dir. Sonja Nowakowski, DEQ
09:13:12 Sen. Christopher Pope
09:15:32 Rep. Gary Parry

Public Comment

09:16:50 None

Committee Questions / Discussion

09:17:08 Rep. Bob Carter
09:18:11 Dir. Sonja Nowakowski, DEQ

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: AI REGULATORY STRUCTURES (HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 4)

09:19:41 Taylor Burkley, Abundance Institute

[EXHIBIT 1](#)

Public Comment

09:41:26 Noel Duram, Commissioner, Lincoln County
09:42:35 Don Cape, Coalition for Safety and Justice

Committee Questions / Discussion

09:46:40 Sen. Gayle Lammers
09:50:09 Taylor Barkley, Abundance Institute
09:51:27 Vice Presiding Officer Becky Edwards
09:51:48 Taylor Barkley, Abundance Institute
09:54:45 Rep. Gary Parry
09:56:11 Taylor Barkley, Abundance Institute
09:58:22 Rep. Bob Carter
09:58:51 Taylor Barkley, Abundance Institute
10:00:36 Rep. Gary Parry

10:01:14 Taylor Barkley, Abundance Institute
10:02:28 Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe
10:03:49 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
10:09:25 Taylor Barkley, Abundance Institute
10:10:37 Rep. Katie Zolnikov
10:13:13 Taylor Barkley, Abundance Institute
10:14:54 Rep. Gary Parry
10:15:33 Taylor Barkley, Abundance Institute
10:16:01 Rep. Bob Carter
10:16:20 Taylor Barkley, Abundance Institute

NORTHWESTERN ENERGY (NWE) AND BLACK HILLS CORP. PROPOSED MERGER

10:17:35 Shannon Heim, General Counsel, Vice President-Federal Government Affairs,
NWE

[EXHIBIT 2](#)

Public Comment

10:28:06 None

Committee Questions / Discussion

10:28:19 Vice Presiding Officer Becky Edwards
10:31:48 Shannon Heim, NWE
10:33:17 Rep. Bob Carter
10:38:36 Shannon Heim, NWE
10:39:08 Rep. Gary Parry
10:39:42 Shannon Heim, NWE
10:41:00 Sen. Christopher Pope
10:50:54 Shannon Heim, NWE
10:51:40 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
10:54:07 Shannon Heim, NWE
10:55:50 Rep. Bob Carter
10:56:20 Shannon Heim, NWE

10:57:55 **Recessed**

11:10:06 **Reconvened**

WASTE-TO-ENERGY (MEMBER TOPIC)

11:10:26 Griffin Burns, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

[EXHIBIT 3](#)

11:12:18 Rep Gary Parry
11:13:06 Griffin Burns, LSD

11:20:05 Rep. Gary Parry
11:20:24 Griffin Burns, LSD
11:25:45 Ron Catlett, Government Relations and Key Member Specialist, Flathead
Electric Cooperatives (FEC)
[EXHIBIT 4](#)

Committee Questions / Discussion

11:36:54 Rep. Bob Carter
11:37:05 Ron Catlett, FEC
11:37:47 Rep. Gary Parry
11:38:05 Ron Catlett, FEC

Public Comment

11:38:38 Noel Duram, Commissioner, Lincoln County
11:42:19 Nick Fitzmaurice, Energy Transition Engineer, Montana Environmental
Information Center

Committee Questions / Discussion Continued

11:44:23 Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe

INTRODUCTION TO INTERSTATE COMPACTS (SENATE JOINT 21)

11:45:47 Carl Sims, Program Director, National Center for Interstate Compacts (NCIC)
[EXHIBIT 5](#)

Public Comment

12:01:20 None

Committee Questions / Discussion

12:01:31 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
12:01:37 Rep. Bob Carter
12:01:55 Carl Sims, NCIC
12:02:43 Sen. Christopher Pope
12:03:37 Carl Sims, NCIC

PUBLIC COMMENT ON RELEVANT TOPICS AND PROJECTS

12:05:21 Kelly Lynch, Executive Director, Montana League of Cities and Towns
12:07:13 Brian Thompson, BNSF
12:08:18 Matt Vincent, Intermountain Infrastructure Group

Committee Questions / Discussion

12:11:59 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
12:13:06 Sen. Christopher Pope

12:17:36 Brian Thompson, BNSF
12:18:00 Rep. Gary Parry
12:18:35 Brian Thompson, BNSF

12:19:09 **Recessed**
13:32:58 **Reconvened**

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION (PSC) UPDATE

13:33:12 Jennifer Fielder, Vice President, PSC
13:38:16 Jeff Welborn, President, PSC
[EXHIBIT 6](#)
13:42:33 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
13:42:44 Alana Lake, Executive Director, PSC
[EXHIBIT 7](#)
13:48:22 Will Rosquist, Regulatory Division Administrator, PSC
[EXHIBIT 8](#)
13:57:00 David Smith, Chief Legal Counsel, PSC
(See EXHIBIT 8)
13:58:50 Rep. Katie Zolnikov and Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe left the meeting.

Public Comment

14:02:24 Kyle Unruh, Renewable Northwest

Committee Questions / Discussion

14:03:03 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
14:06:12 Jeff Welborn, PSC
14:06:24 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
14:08:13 Alana Lake, PSC
14:08:40 Sen. Christopher Pope
14:09:28 Jeff Welborn, PSC
14:09:52 Will Rosquist, PSC
14:11:01 Sen. Christopher Pope
14:11:42 Will Rosquist, PSC
14:12:05 Rep. Gary Parry
14:14:29 Will Rosquist, PSC
14:14:46 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
14:15:53 Will Rosquist, PSC
14:16:06 Rep. Bob Carter
14:16:20 Will Rosquist, PSC

TRANSMISSION UPGRADES & REGIONALIZATION

(senate joint resolution 12 and 21)

NORTH PLAINS CONNECTOR: PROJECT UPDATE, CURRENT UTILITY OWNERSHIP, AND HOW DOES MONTANA'S REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT COMPARE TO NORTH DAKOTA'S?

14:18:25 Brant Johnson, Senior Vice President Development, Grid United

Committee Questions / Discussion

14:26:37 Sen. Gayle Lammers

14:26:38 Brant Johnson, Grid United

14:27:13 Sen. Christopher Pope

14:27:48 Brant Johnson, Grid United

TRANSMISSION UPGRADES & REGIONALIZATION

(senate joint resolution 12 and 21)

ENERGY STRATEGIES TRANSMISSION UPGRADE STUDY

14:28:29

14:28:41 Keegan Moyer, Energy Strategies

[EXHIBIT 9](#)

Public Comment

14:39:42 David Herbst, American Power Play

[EXHIBIT 10](#)

[EXHIBIT 11](#)

Committee Questions / Discussion

14:40:50 Vice Presiding Officer Becky Edwards

14:41:03 Keegan Moyer, Energy Strategies

14:43:44 Rep. Gary Parry

14:44:23 Keegan Moyer, Energy Strategies

14:45:39 Sen. Christopher Pope

14:49:56 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov

14:50:42 Keegan Moyer, Energy Strategies

14:53:16 Rep. Gary Parry

14:53:50 Keegan Moyer, Energy Strategies

ADMINISTRATIVE WORK SESSION

14:57:21 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov

14:57:40 Rep. Bob Carter

[EXHIBIT 12](#)

15:01:25 Sen. Gayle Lammers

15:04:29 Rep. Bob Carter

15:07:15 Sen. Gayle Lammers
15:08:48 Rep. Bob Carter
15:09:32 Rep. Gary Parry
15:10:03 Rep. Bob Carter
15:11:11 Rep. Gary Parry
15:11:33 Sen. Gayle Lammers
15:12:06 Rep. Bob Carter
15:13:51 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
15:15:16 Sen. Gayle Lammers
15:15:43 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
15:16:03 Sen. Christopher Pope
15:17:41 Rep. Gary Parry
15:18:05 Rep. Bob Carter
15:19:26 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov

Public Comment

15:19:39 Kyle Unruh, Renewable Northwest
15:20:44 Bruce Spencer, Renewable Northwest

15:22:05 **Recessed**
15:38:19 **Reconvened**

DATA CENTER WATER USAGE, BEOWULF'S CLOSED-LOOP SYSTEM

15:38:25 Pace Ralli, Beowulf Electricity and Data

Committee Questions / Discussion

15:43:12 Sen. Christopher Pope
15:43:55 Pace Ralli, Beowulf Electricity and Data
15:45:07 Sen. Christopher Pope
15:46:36 Sen. Gayle Lammers
15:49:31 Pace Ralli, Beowulf Electricity and Data
15:50:58 Sen. Gayle Lammers
15:51:13 Sen. Gregg Hunter
15:52:32 Pace Ralli, Beowulf Electricity and Data

DATA CENTER WATER USAGE, SABEY DATA CENTER'S CLOSED-LOOP SYSTEM

15:53:43 Rob Corbin, Sabey Data Centers

Committee Questions / Discussion

15:59:51 Rep. Bob Carter
16:02:43 Rob Corbin, Sabey Data Centers

16:02:54 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
16:03:36 Rob Corbin, Sabey Data Centers
16:03:48 Rep. Bob Carter
16:03:58 Rob Corbin, Sabey Data Centers
16:04:26 Rep. Gary Parry
16:04:45 Rob Corbin, Sabey Data Centers

Public Comment

16:05:56 Matt Elsasser

ADMINISTRATIVE WORK SESSION

16:07:05 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
16:09:31 Rep. Gary Parry
16:10:33 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
16:10:52 Griffin Burns, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
16:13:04 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
16:13:11 Vice Presiding Officer Becky Edwards
16:13:38 Griffin Burns, LSD
16:15:02 Rep. Gary Parry
16:15:18 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
16:17:45 Rep. Gary Parry
16:18:09 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
16:18:25 Sen. Christopher Pope
16:18:42 Vice Presiding Officer Becky Edwards
16:19:29 Rep. Gary Parry
16:20:20 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
16:20:50 Vice Presiding Officer Becky Edwards

Motion

16:20:58 Rep. Becky Edwards, moved to begin drafting Surface Level Permitting for Geothermal committee bill. Passed by acclimation.

ADMINISTRATIVE WORK SESSION CONTINUED

16:22:10 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
16:22:15 Sen. Christopher Pope
16:27:06 Rep. Gary Parry
16:27:37 Sen. Christopher Pope
16:30:44 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
16:31:01 Sen. Christopher Pope
16:31:25 Sen. Gregg Hunter
16:32:19 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
16:33:00 Sen. Christopher Pope

16:33:13 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
16:34:08 Sen. Christopher Pope
16:34:40 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
16:34:56 Sen. Gayle Lammers
16:37:53 Presiding Officer Daniel Zolnikov
16:38:42 Sen. Christopher Pope
16:39:09 Sen. Gayle Lammers

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 16:40:01