



2025.01.29 - HB314 - Montana Legislature

Mr. Chairman and committee members, my name is Kyle Unruh, last name U-N-R-U-H. I am here on behalf of Renewable Northwest, a non-profit representing over 80 members, including power marketers, purchasers, environmental NGOs, and most clean energy developers who operate in the Pacific Northwest. Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on HB 314.

Establishing a Montana Energy Authority as provided in this bill would be a major step forward in facilitating transmission and generation development needed in Montana. As a result of most of the existing transmission system's latent capacity being fully utilized, new generators of all types are encountering prohibitive interconnection upgrade costs and timelines. Lack of interstate transmission capacity, particularly in peak periods, is driving up costs for Montana's citizens and industry, while also limiting reliability benefits that come from regional interconnection with substantial load and generation diversity. At the same time, electricity demand is growing rapidly across the region and the West, and every other state in the Western interconnection is making major investments in new transmission capacity in order to improve reliability, lower prices, and remain competitive for industry.

Renewable Northwest supports this bill as proposed, insofar as it provides the Montana Energy Authority will be funded through growth in the existing tax structure (i.e. the existing Wholesale Energy Transaction Tax). Although our support is not conditional on any further improvements to the bill, we would advise the committee consider placing prudent safeguards for conflicts of interest of the energy authority members, such as if they have a financial stake in certain proposed development or have a regulatory role overseeing such development.

Thank you for your consideration.