

Oppose Efforts to Kill Montana's Renewable Portfolio Standard

Montana should be increasing and strengthening its RPS, not weakening it

OPPOSE HB 475 (Representative Skees) and HB 576 (Representative Schillinger)

- **HB 475 would allow energy from existing hydroelectric dams to be considered renewable energy under the state's RPS.** The law already allows utilities to count any energy that results from dam upgrades toward their renewable energy obligations. The RPS was intended to encourage **new** renewable energy in Montana because of its benefits to agriculture, the tax base, and jobs in Montana. HB 475 would effectively eliminate the state's renewable energy standard by literally and figuratively flooding the system with energy from 100+ year-old dams.
- **HB 576 would eliminate the Montana Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) and allow NorthWestern Energy (NWE) to get away with failing to pay a fee of \$2.5 million to tribal and low income energy assistance programs.** The 2005 RPS was intended to encourage the development of renewable energy resources across Montana in order to benefit agriculture, improve rural economic development opportunities, grow the tax base, and increase jobs. **The RPS has been an effective tool in steadily and affordably increasing the renewable energy mix in our state,** creating jobs in the process. Because of an amendment that includes similar language to that of [SB 237](#), this bill would also retroactively repeal the CREP (community renewable energy project) program. NWE broke the law by failing to meet this requirement multiple years and was ordered by a district court judge to pay into tribal and low-income energy assistance programs. Legislators should not allow NWE to get away with failing to invest in community-owned energy projects and then ripping off tribal and low-income groups on top of that.

The Latest in a Long History of Corporate Overreach by NorthWestern Energy

- The Sierra Club opposes bringing hydropower into our RPS. Even if we disregard hydropower's damaging effects on wildlife and watersheds, relying on electricity from dams that were built long ago - sometimes more than a century ago - does not reduce carbon emissions today.
- By eliminating the RPS, the legislature sends the industry a message that Montana is hostile to renewable energy development. Montana currently has one of the lowest renewable portfolio standards in the country. **These bills move Montana in the wrong direction and undermine efforts to move towards clean, renewable, affordable energy in Montana.**
- Proponents of this bill argue this bill has already served its purpose. But NorthWestern Energy still has yet to purchase the Community Renewable Energy Projects required under this statute, also shirking the \$2.5 million penalty.
- Not only would Montana be the first state in the nation to repeal an RPS if these bills pass, **these bills also force Montana in a direction that is not supported by the majority of Montanans, who overwhelmingly support investing in more clean energy.**

We're seeing a slurry of NorthWestern Energy-sponsored bills and other bills aligned with NorthWestern Energy's efforts to pursue fossil fuels this legislative session as the company continues its history of aggressive interference in the Montana Legislature. NorthWestern Energy (NWE) is a for-profit company with a guaranteed monopoly over supplying energy to most of Western Montana. This company plays a key role in determining Montana's energy supply mix and energy future. NWE stands out in comparison with many other utilities across the country for its drive to build new fossil fuel plants in the middle of a climate emergency.