

Government and Politics

3 April 2013 S Finance – HB2/open JY

The chairman of the Senate Finance and Claims committee says the panel is looking to remove some spending from the state's main budget bill.

Senator Rick Ripley's comments come as the Finance Committee began its review of House Bill 2 today (yesterday).

(YPR's) Jackie Yamanaka has more from the Capitol. (ATC/ME)

(2:36)

3 April 2013 Bonding/changes JY (ATC/ME)

The House Appropriations committee this week removed all of the projects in the bonding bill and replaced them with two tribal water rights compacts.

Democratic Representative Galen Hollenbaugh is the sponsor of House Bill 14. He says that action keeps House Bill 14 alive as a back-up.

HOLLENBAUGH: cash is pretty much the way it seems like its going to be going and it looks like our EFB will most likely be able to accommodate most of those buildings so we can pay in cash. Ther'es still a lot to be doe on HB 2 – the state budget – and many other bills that are still floating around so we really don't have a good picture about how much cash we have so we need the option to be able to move a few of those projects back into bonding if it indeed don't have the cash at the end of the day (:28)

Most of the projects to be bonded were for the Montana University system. This includes new buildings for Missoula College and a new science building at MSU-Billings.

Last week, all of the projects were moved from House Bill 14 to House Bill 5. The later is known as the long-range building bill that pays for water and bridge projects with cash.

The amended House Bill 5 passed the House on a 72-to-27 final vote and now will be considered by the Senate.

The House, meanwhile, will take up the newly amended bonding bill – House Bill 14 – tomorrow (today).

4 April 2013 Williams rejected/BOR JY

On a basically 23-to-26 party-line vote, the Senate rejected former Congressman Pat Williams for the Montana Board of Regents.

Supporters urged colleagues to look past Williams' recent controversial remarks referring to "thugs" do describe some athletes at the University of Montana... and instead focus on his qualification. But opponents said those comments reveal a lot about the nominee.

Jackie Yamanaka has more from the Capitol. (ATC/ME)

(2:36)

8 April 2013 House blast/SB 107 – deviant sex law JY

The House tomorrow (today) will debate a bill that de-criminalizes gay sex between consenting adults.

On a 60-to-38 vote, Representatives voted to take Senate Bill 107 from the table in the House Judiciary Committee and to the floor for debate.

(YPR's) Jackie Yamanaka has more from the Capitol. (ATC/ME)

(2:18)

10 April 2013 H Final approval/SB 107 JY (ATC/ME)

A bill that officially seeks to remove an unconstitutional law from the books now goes to the governor for consideration.

That law says gay sex is a felony punishable by up to 10 years in prison and a fine of up to 50-thousand dollars.

The Montana House gave final approval today (yesterday) to Senate Bill 107 on a bipartisan 65-34 vote.

In reality, a unanimous Montana Supreme Court declared the law unconstitutional in 1997.

It stems from a case where Linda Gryczan (gr-eye-san) of Helena was the lead plaintiff in a case challenging the law.

But even with the legal victory, the language remained on the books, despite numerous attempts to have it removed.

Gryczan says she was overcome with emotion when Representatives gave preliminary approval to the bill Tuesday.

GRYCZAN: because it's a symbol, and I didn't realize until 64 lawmakers said 'yes' what a powerful symbol it is. And removing unconstitutional words from the book that's not the real change that happened. The real change that happened was the cultural change from the collective work that's been done over the last decade here and elsewhere that has created the culture that allows this to happen. (:28)

She says the next challenge will be to protect the Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-and-Transgender community from discrimination.

•• 10 April 2013 CC_Promo_Show

JY

PROMO: This week on Capitol Connections: the two Senate leaders discuss what's next and what might happen to the major bills in that chamber following the blow-up on the Senate floor last Friday. You can hear Senate President Jeff Essmann and Senate Minority Leader Jon Sesso discuss what's ahead for the state's main budget bill, the state employee pay plan, pensions, and long range building projects... Wednesday evening, beginning at 6:30. (:30)

SHOW: Aired 10 April 2013 at 6:30 pm

(Theme Music)

Welcome to Capitol Connections, a weekly public affairs program focusing on the 2013 Montana Legislature. I'm J.Y.

On tonight's program: Senate President Jeff Essmann and Senate Minority Leader Jon Sesso talk about what's next for several major pieces of legislation awaiting action in the Senate. The question comes after Senate Democrats erupted in shouting and desk pounding last Friday.

As part of the "voices of the week" segment – here's a look back at what sparked the Democrat's ire.

It started Thursday with Democrats objecting to two voter referendum bills – introduced late in the session. The flash point came over Senate Bill 405 which would ask voters to end same day voter registration and voting.

First, Senate President Jeff Essmann defends Senate Bill 405, followed by Senator Larry Jent speaking against.

(TAPE: Essmann: it's not like you wake up find out, 'oh my god there's going to be an election today. .." if it's a not a high enough priority to reigter days early are they going to be a thoughtful voter?

JENT: ...excuse me members.")

When Democrats were unsuccessful in defeating those two bills, they renewed efforts the next day. Their attempt at a procedural move led to this:

(TAPE: ambient)

On Monday, the Senate Rules Committee met and on a series of party-line votes declared its actions Friday were proper.

Leading Senator Greg Jergeson to ask the members to drop any further recriminations and get back to work.

(TAPE: “we need to put aside any further circular firing squads...what went on last Friday and commit ourselves to working the way ... we can pick ourselves up and dust ourselves off and get back to work.”)

Getting back to work and what that means for the major pieces of legislation before the Senate was the question put to the Senate leaders. Both agreed to talk about that yesterday in their offices.

(TAPE: Essmann)

(FILL MUSIC: “Kelvinator” by Kaki King, Glow 2012 Katherine King under exclusive license to Velour Recordings, Inc)

(TAPE: Sesso)

You’ve been listening to Capitol Connections, a weekly public affairs program that features legislators, elected officials and others talking about the 2013 Montana Legislature.

For more information and links for this program, go to our website: ypradio-dot-org-slash-news.

Capitol Connections is a production of YPR news.

12 April 2013 Campaign disclosure/tempers JY

A bill to require a disclaimer on election materials funded by anonymous contributions raised the ire of some Senators.

It came during debate on House Bill 254.

Supporter say it’s time to shine the light on what has come to be known as “dark money.” But opponents say this is just a bad bill.

(YPR’s) Jackie Yamanaka has more from the Capitol. (ATC/ME)

(3:07)

15 April 2013 Pay Plan Passes JY

The Senate Finance and Claims committee approved a pay plan package for state employees.

As (YPR's) Jackie Yamanaka reports from the Capitol, the committee made changes to the bill, but the lump sum dollar amounts remain the same as the House-passed version of the bill.(ATC/ME)

(2:50)

•• 17 April 2013 CC_Promo_Show JY

PROMO: This week on Capitol Connections: Senate Finance and Claims Committee chairman Rick Ripley talks about the state budget process and then House Speaker Pro Tem Austin Knudsen of Culbertson talks about some of the bills aimed at helping oil and gas impacted communities... Wednesday evening, beginning at 6:30. (:23)

SHOW: Aired 17 April 2013 at 6:30 pm

(THEME MUSIC)

Welcome to Capitol Connections, a weekly public affairs program focusing on the 2013 Montana Legislature. I'm J.Y.

On tonight's program: The Senate debated then voted on the state's main budget bill Saturday. Final approval came yesterday. Because of Senate changes, House Bill 2 returns to the House.

Coming up: we'll talk budgets with The Finance Chairman - Senator Ripley.

Also House Speaker Pro Tem Austin Knudsen of Culbertson talks about some of the bills aimed at helping oil and gas impacted communities

First some "Voices from the Week..."

(TAPE)

The voices we heard: Senator Rick Ripley asking for some legal advice on state pensions of retired chief legal council for the Office of Commissioner of Higher Education LeRoy Schramm.

Finally, Senator Ripley's closing remarks on the state's main budget bill – HB 2 – on Saturday.

(TAPE: Sen. Rick Ripley)

(FILL MUSIC: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly by Ennio Morricone, 1966, Capitol/EMI Music Distribution)

(TAPE: Rep. Austin Knudsen)

(THEME MUSIC)

You’ve been listening to Capitol Connections, a weekly public affairs program that features legislators, elected officials and others discussing the 2013 Montana Legislature.

Our theme music is by the Alex Naumann Trio.

For more information and links for this program, go to our website: ypradio-dot-org-slash-news.

Capitol Connections is a production of YPR news.

(29:24/29:54)

18 April 2013 H accepts SA to approps JY

A bi-partisan House accepted the Senate’s amendments for a series of appropriations bills. This includes the state’s main budget proposal – House Bill 2.

As (YPR’s) Jackie Yamanaka reports the next step for the measure is a final vote in the Hosue and then to the governor’s desk. (ATC/ME)

(2:08)

19 April 2013 Budget bills coming together JY

More pieces of the budget puzzle are starting to fall into place, perhaps moving lawmakers closer to wrapping up the 2013 Montana Legislative session.

As (YPR's) Jackie Yamanaka reports from the Capitol, Representatives today approved of the Senate's amendments to the state employee pay plan and the long-range building program, which includes 2 projects for higher education. (ATC/ME)

(3:43)

22 April 2013 Tutvedt/Tax Simplification JY

A House-Senate Conference Committee began its work on a tax simplification bill this afternoon (yesterday) by stripping the House changes to Senate Bill 282.

As (YPR's) Jackie Yamanaka reports from the Capitol, the action was taken to make the bill more revenue neutral. (ATC/ME)

(2:14)

23 April 2013 DEQ Dir confirmed/T StoneManning JY

The Montana Senate confirmed Tracy Stone-Manning as director of the Department of Environmental Quality.

As (YPR's) Jackie Yamanaka reports from the Capitol, opponents blasted her past environmental activism while supporters say Stone-Manning has proven she's can collaborate and mediate difficult natural resource issues. (ATC/ME)

(3:48)

23 April 2013 Budget talks – Gov & xgr leaders JY

Representatives of the Bullock Administration and Legislative leaders sat down last evening to talk about how to work out differences between several key pieces of legislation.

(YPR's) Jackie Yamanaka has more from the Capitol, (ATC/ME)

(1:47)

23 April 2013 Baucus/announcement JY

Senator Max Baucus says while he plans to leave the U-S Senate when his term ends at the end of next year, he says he's not "retiring."

As Jackie Yamanaka reports from Helena, the Democrat says he's just moving on to other projects and returning home. (ATC/ME)

(3:13)

24 April 2013 HB2 Negotiated Fix JY

Legislative leaders and the Bullock administration were able to come to a deal over a dispute over the state's main budget bill. It will allow legislators to wrap up their work and go home today.

(YPR's) Jackie Yamanaka has more from the Capitol. (ATC/ME)

(2:59)

24 April 2013 2013 xgr – Sine Die JY

The Montana House of Representatives wasted no time this morning following its late night floor session last/Tuesday night.

The story was different in the Senate.

(YPR's) Jackie Yamanaka starts our team coverage from the Capitol with the action from the House. (ATC/ME)

(3:09)

25 April 2013 Gov & reax to Sine Die JY

Soon the main budget bill and its companions will travel to Governor Steve Bullock for his consideration.

The Democrat won't say definitively if he will sign House Bill 2 and the companion budget bill that was part of a late Tuesday night negotiated deal.

(YPR's) Jackie Yamanaka has more from the Capitol. (ATC/ME)

(1:55)

25 April 2013 GOP Rift JY

A group of House and Senate Republicans went against their leadership several times and joined Democrats in passing key bills.

(YPR's) Jackie Yamanaka has more from the Capitol on the group that's calling itself – quote - "the responsible Republicans." (ATC/ME)

(4:43)

17 June 2013 BOR – state dollars allocated JY

The Montana Board of Regents approved how it will divvy up money among the campuses appropriated by the 2013 Legislature.

The Regents met via telephone conference call today. Jackie Yamanaka reports.
(ATC/ME)

(1:31)

HOST OUT: You can see the spreadsheets on how the money appropriated from the Montana Legislature was divided among the campuses at our website: ypradio.org/news

Environment

4 June 2013 Fergus County Flooding JY

Some Lewistown-area residents are dealing with flooding as several major creeks overflowed their banks.

As Jackie Yamanaka reports, the National Weather Service says some relief is expected as the rain is expected to taper off, but another storm system is forecast to move back into the area next week. (ATC/ME)

(2:34)

HOST OUT: For links to the Fergus County office of Disaster and Emergency Services and its Facebook page, go to our website: ypradio-dot-org-slash-news

5 June 2013 GTNP-Active Trails

JY

Grand Teton National Park wants encourage visitors to leave their vehicles and enjoy the scenic Wyoming park's trails.

As Jackie Yamanaka reports, Grand Teton is launching a wellness initiative tomorrow (today) as part of the National Park Foundation's Active Trails Program. (ATC/ME)

(2:37)

HOST OUT: YPR is part of a multi-public radio station reporting project on the issue of transportation. For links about the Active Trails program or Transportation Nation, go to our website: ypradio-dot-org-slash-news.

19 June 2013 Yellowstone Kelly_Trails

JY

Billings' bike and walking trail system is positioned to showcase some of the region's history and culture. Along the city's Heritage Trail: Boothill Cemetery, Skeleton Cliff, and Yellowstone Kelly's Grave.

But this area along the Swords Rimrock Trail has fallen into dis-repair.

As Jackie Yamanaka reports the Billings Chamber of Commerce is leading an effort to restore the area. (ATC/ME)

(3:10)

HOST OUT: YPR is part of a multi-public radio station reporting project on the issue of transportation. To see pictures of Yellowstone Kelly's grave or for more information about Transportation Nation, go to our website: ypradio-dot-org-slash-news

20 June 2013 Billings Runway Re-pave

JY

Montana's largest airport will be largely shut down for several weekends this summer so crews can re-pave the main runway. Additional runway upgrades are also part of the project.

Airport officials took reporters on a tour to preview the work to be done. Jackie Yamanaka has more on this project and what impact the work will have on passenger and freight traffic. (ATC/ME)

(2:31)

HOST OUT: YPR is part of a multi-public radio station reporting project on the issue of transportation. To see pictures and links for more information about the runway overlay project or Transportation Nation, go to our website: ypradio-dot-org-slash-news.

Health

3 April 2013 Close Loophole/Designer Drugs JY

Montana law enforcement officials have a new tool to crack down on synthetic designer drugs, know by names like: “bath salts” or “spice.”

These drugs were perceived as legal because they were sold over-the-counter, including at some convenience stores.

But as (YPR’s) Jackie Yamanaka reports, law enforcement officials say these drugs were designed to give the user a high. (ATC/ME)

(2:13)

3 April 2013 Medicaid Expansion – House JY

The Montana House, meanwhile, refused to bring a Medicaid expansion bill from committee and to the floor for debate.

Representative Chuck Hunter was unsuccessful in getting the 60 votes needed to bring the Governor’s Access Health Montana plan to the floor.

As (YPR’s) Jackie Yamanaka reports, the House instead gave preliminary approval to a health care bill with a broad title, but little substance. (ME)

(2:07)

15 April 2013 HB 2/S Floor – Grand deal JY

The Senate restored federal funding for family planning and cancer screenings for low-income women. Approval came in exchange for the elimination of about 500 - currently vacant - state jobs.

The action came during debate on the state’s main budget measure – House Bill 2.

(YPR’s) Jackie Yamanaka has more from the Capitol, on the cross-over votes to pass both of those amendments and then the bill. (ATC/ME)

(4:47)

17 April 2013 H Human Svcs Reject Medicaid Ex JY

After about 20 minutes of discussion, the House Human Services Committee rejected a Medicaid Expansion bill on a party line vote.

(YPR's) Jackie Yamanaka has more from the Capitol. (ATC/ME)

(1:03)

17 April 2013 Tempers Flare/Health Insurance JY

Tempers flared on the Senate floor over a bill that would basically have Montana to seek a federal waiver to use the money that otherwise would be spent on Medicaid expansion to instead help low-income Montanans purchase private insurance.

(YPR's) Jackie Yamanaka has more from the Capitol. (ATC/ME)

(2:53)

26 June 2013 Ballot proposal-Medicaid Expand JY

A coalition launched its campaign to take Medicaid Expansion to Montana voters next year.

The coalition today (yesterday) filed paperwork with the Office of Commissioner of Political Practices to form a committee to advocate for their ballot measure. Jackie Yamanaka reports. (ATC/ME)

(3:01)

Education

9 April 2011 School Funding/SB 175 – H JY

Officials from Montana schools – small, large, urban and rural – along with the business community say Senate Bill 175 will provide needed funding and accountability measures.

Opponents criticized the bill for a reference to a common core curriculum and for not doing enough for impacted schools.

Senate Bill 175 was heard before the House Education Committee late yesterday.

Jackie Yamanaka has more from the Capitol. (ATC/ME)

(3:35)

9 April 2013 Long Range Building projects/S Fin JY

A Senate committee is considering a bill to pay cash for a number of deferred maintenance projects, as well as several building projects for the Montana university system.

The later were once part of what was known as the “bonding bill.” The House, however, removed those projects from House Bill 14 and put them into a different measure – House Bill 5.

(YPR’s) Jackie Yamanaka reports. (ATC/ME)

(2:34)

17 April 2013 School funding bill/L Jones SB175 JY

The House gave final approval to the major school funding vehicle at the Montana Legislature.

On a 58-to-41 vote, Senate Bill 175 now returns to the Senate because of changes made in the House.

(YPR’s) Jackie Yamanaka has more from the Capitol. (ATC/ME)

(2:18)

24 June 2013 PPL grant – BackPack Meals JY

A program that provides Billings children with meals on weekends and over the holidays received a 5-thousand dollar donation today (yesterday) to buy food.

The PPL-Montana Community Fund awarded the check to the Billings Public Schools BackPack Meals program.

Jackie Yamanaka reports. (ATC/ME)

(2:37)

HOST OUT: to see pictures and for more information about the BackPack Meals Program and the PPL-Montana Community Fund, go to our website: ypradio-dot-org-slash-news.

Rural and Small Town Issues

29 April 2013 Bullock_Bill Signing_State Parks JY

Montana’s state parks will now have their own governing board with the creation of a new state parks and recreation board.

Governor Steve Bullock signed House Bill 24 into law this (yesterday) afternoon at Pictograph Cave State Park in Billings. Jackie Yamanaka reports. (ME/ATC)

(2:44)

Wildlife

April 2013 Bison mgt

JY

Officials would be prohibited from transferring, relocating, or transplanting Yellowstone National Park bison under a bill given preliminary approval by the Montana Senate.

The sponsor of Senate Bill 143 says the state needs to take action because the federal government has failed to manage wild bison. (YPR's) Jackie Yamanaka has more from the Capitol. (ATC/ME)

(2:04)

12 April 2013 Aquatic Invasive

JY

Two fiscally conservative senators spoke about the need to spending state dollars to aggressively stomp down on aquatic invasive species.

House Bill 586 would also authorize the use of quarantines and check stations of equipment in an attempt to keep aquatic invasive species from spreading across Montana. Jackie Yamanaka has more from the Capitol. (ATC/ME)

(2:11)

7 June 2013 GTNP – Cattle Drive

JY

Visitors to Grand Teton National Park early tomorrow morning will get to experience a vestige of the old west...a cattle drive.

Wranglers from the Pinto Ranch will drive a herd of nearly 300-head of cattle along Highway 26 to Moran Junction to their summer pasture in the park.

Jackie Yamanaka has more on this annual event and what it means for motorists in Grand Teton National Park. (ATC/ME)

(2:45)

HOST OUT: YPR is part of a multi-public radio station reporting project on the issue of transportation. You can see pictures of past cattle drives in Grand Teton National Park and find out more information about Transportation Nation at our website: ypradio-dot-org-slash-news.