

# Issues

## That Taylor supported

There were 1,316 different bills introduced in the 61st Legislature. A few examples of the bills that Taylor Brown either worked for, or actually co-sponsored, include:

### SELF DEFENSE AND FIREARM RIGHTS

SB 228 (Kerns) protects in law the fact that everyone has the right to defend oneself wherever he or she lawfully is, a version of the “Castle” doctrine. *passed*

### TRANSPARENCY IN GOVERNMENT

SB 241 (Balyeat) would have established a website similar to other states, from which the general public could search and download information about the state budget and expenditures. *defeated*

### REDUCE CAPITAL GAINS TAXES

SB 503, (Essmann) would have provided stimulus for the creation of new jobs in Montana through a tax incentive for new business startups, and for existing businesses that relocate here. This law would have created a 5% income tax credit on the sale of stock in a Montana business that has been held for at least five years and a longer term credit against on the sale of Montana business property if 60% of their employees are located in Montana. It would also give 50% depreciation recapture on equipment purchased, if that equipment was fabricated or assembled in Montana. *vetoed*

### MONTANA MILK CONTROL BOARD

SB 286 (T. Brown) clarifies how the Milk Control Board oversees and regulates the state’s dairy industry, and their authority to maintain a stable market price for milk producers. *passed*

### INCREASE COAL BOARD FUNDING

SB 100 (Black) temporarily increases distribution of coal severance tax revenue to impacted cities and counties. *passed*

### STREAM ACCESS FROM BRIDGES

HB 190 (Van Dyk) representing an important compromise between landowners and sportsman, clarifying the law that allows people to gain reasonable access to waterways by using a public bridge. It specifies that landowners can attach fences to bridge abutments, improves liability protection to landowners, reinforces that access is not created at bridges on roads by prescription, clarifies that access is specific to the use of the water, and spells out the process for disputes or to involve the Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks to pay for installation of an access feature if required. *passed*

To read the text, or see more history and details on these bills or any other piece of legislation, just go to our website and click on the link to “Montana Legislature”.

### REDUCE BUSINESS EQUIPMENT TAXES

SB 490 (R. Brown) would have provided total exemption from taxation for the first \$20,000 of business equipment owned, then for up to \$500,000 worth of equipment this bill would have cut taxes by one third, to 2%. Above \$500,000 in business equipment, a business would continue to pay the current 3%. *defeated*

### RESPONSIBLE NATURAL RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

HB 483 (Jones) streamlines the appeals process for developers who have permits for energy projects such as power plants and power lines. *(passed)*

### WORKERS’ COMPENSATION REFORM

SB 371 (Perry) would have specified that if an injury occurs on a break off the employee worksite, or at some company party or picnic, it is not a work related injury that qualifies for work comp. *vetoed*

### NEW SUPPORT FOR AG EDUCATION & FFA

HB 464 (O’Hara) provides financial support for high schools to implement the new National Quality Program Standards for Ag Ed, to increase the quality of their program, or to hire an Ag instructor and add Ag Ed in their school. *passed*



TAYLOR BROWN

STATE SENATE DISTRICT 22

JUNE 2009

# 2009 Montana Legislative Report

Now that the Montana’s Legislature has adjourned, and we legislators are all back home, I am getting two questions:

- 1 WHAT EXACTLY did the 2009 Legislature really accomplish?
- 2 WHAT WAS it like for you in your first term in public office?

First of all, it was a very humbling experience to serve, and I learned a lot. With this newsletter I will try to answer the two questions above, and give you some of my own perspective on what we were able to achieve.

I am extremely grateful for the trust that was placed in me by the voters of Senate District 22, and I worked hard to represent them in the best way I could. The even split in the legislature made it very hard to get anything passed that was at all controversial, but in the end I think the people of Montana were well served. Many of you took the time to write, or call, or even drop by and share your ideas with me in Helena. Thank you for being involved in the process!

Taylor



## First Senate Page!

This sharp young lady from Colstrip spent the second week of the session in Helena where Taylor Brown sponsored her as a Senate Page. Kaitlyn Nolte, the 17 year old Senior Class President at Colstrip High School, is the daughter of Don and Lisa Nolte. Don runs a backhoe as a heavy equipment operator at the Western Energy coal mine. In February Taylor also sponsored Taylor Billing of Jordan, daughter of Tom and Dale Ann Billing as his second Page.

In the end, nobody got exactly what they wanted. Some felt that we cut too much, and they are betting that the economy will recover in two years so they can propose increases in important government programs. Others felt that we did not cut enough, and that unless this economy begins to rebound quickly, we are going to have to go back to Helena and make more cuts. I for one am adamantly opposed to raising taxes, but I am worried that our increased spending may cause a serious challenge, in an economy that is going to be slow to recover. I hope I am wrong, and that others are right, that the economy is going to rebound quickly and our state budgets will soon look a lot better. In the meantime, I think we in the state legislature need to be very cautious in how we spend your money.

## Achieving a Balanced Budget

I am proud to say that we met our primary goal, to balance the budget (House Bill 2) for each of the next two years. These are very unusual times. First, we experienced a drop of over \$250 million in anticipated state revenues from the time we received the Governor’s proposed budget in December. Yet at the same time, Montana is expecting over \$900 million in Federal Stimulus funds in a big one-time infusion of cash. This double whammy made it very challenging to think and plan with long term vision.

In the end, we did limit spending, but not as much as many of us wanted. We approved a total two-year General Fund budget of \$3.25 billion, which means for most state Agencies an average of 1.6% growth for each of the next two years, dramatically less than the recent past. The exception is that there is slightly more growth in dollars for K-12 education, where we will see a modest 3% increase

in each of the next years. We also compromised on the increase in the base for education. Schools will see a 1% permanent increase next year, and 3% more in the second year...not as much as many would like, but again, more than most other parts of the state budget.

We also voted to fund the Healthy Montana Kids program at two and a half times the poverty level, meaning a family with four children and an annual income of up to \$73,000 will now be eligible for free health insurance under the program known as CHIP. I still feel personally that this level may be too high, and diverts money out of the General Fund where it could have been used for programs like education; but in the end we basically implemented CHIP starting this coming October at the full amount that Montana voters authorized when they passed Initiative 155 last fall.

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## Colstrip Day in Helena

Senator Taylor Brown and Representative Duane Ankney were pleased to help host a reception for their fellow legislators and state leaders in Helena on January 26 to mark the 10th Anniversary of the incorporation of the City of Colstrip. About 120 people attended, including about 50 or so legislators, to hear about the issues important to Colstrip and Rosebud County. Co-sponsored by PPL, NorthWestern Energy, Puget Sound Energy, Avista Corp, Portland General Electric Company, Western Energy Company, Colstrip Electric Inc., and the Rosebud Power Plant the celebration drew many Colstrip residents to the capitol city to participate in the event. *(L to R) Kent Salitros-Western Energy, Representative Duane Ankney, Jim Atchison-Southeastern MT Development Corp., Pastor Robert Shy-Unity Community Church, Les Mahon-First Interstate Bank, Lu Shomate-Schoolhouse History & Art Center, Taylor Brown*



TAYLOR BROWN

STATE SENATE DISTRICT 22

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# A Nice Compliment

FOR THE 61ST LEGISLATURE

“Legislators used the entire 90 days to get the work done, but they did it and they did it with class. On the final day, the conference committee crafted a final budget bill that was more than the fiscal conservatives wanted but less than what the social liberals wanted. It was a compromise crafted by both parties and both legislative chambers...an agreement that showed the people that our elected officials can be true statesmen and women.”  
– (Montana Catholic Conference Legislative Update.)

## The Federal Stimulus Implementing the American Recovery and Re-Investment Act

Many of us do not approve of the Federal Government’s Stimulus Spending, which I personally am afraid will result in permanent growth of government, and saddle our grandchildren with debt. The fact is however, that the money is coming to Montana, and the legislature spent much time appropriating the funds through House Bill 645.

The \$922 million coming to our state is about 1% of the total nationwide. Here in Montana that will include things like; \$235 million for highways, about \$150 million for schools, and another \$150 million for city and county and tribal infrastructure projects, plus \$93 million for higher education. It also expands many tax credits and tax deductions designed to spur the economy. Because most of the funds are designated to go to Programs instead of to Projects, our goal was to avoid using this federal money to fund

ongoing programs that we would not be able to afford in the future, to try to avoid permanently ballooning government.

### Local Stimulus projects in Senate District 22

#### YELLOWSTONE COUNTY

Remodel Courthouse, improvements on Clapper Flat and Vandaveer and Alkali Creek roads.

#### ROSEBUD COUNTY

Ingomar water and sewer project, Forsyth Library elevator, Forsyth water storage tank and water works repairs, Colstrip Orchard lift station replacement.

#### TREASURE COUNTY

Renovations in county buildings, overlay streets in Hysham.

#### CUSTER COUNTY

Silo Loop road, Pine Hills improvement, repair and remodel county buildings, Miles City stormwater system.



Senate District 22



## Montana’s Congressman Denny Rehberg addresses the Legislature

Following his address to a joint session of the Montana Legislature on March 13, U.S. Congressman Denny Rehberg poses with freshman Senator Taylor Brown and two of Brown’s greatest mentors in the legislature: Representative Duane Ankney of Colstrip (left) and Senator Jerry Black of Shelby (center). As the Manager of KSEN/KZIN Radio in Shelby, Jerry Black worked closely with Taylor for many years while he owned these two great affiliate stations of the Northern Ag Network.

## Mitigating Property Taxes over the next 6 years

Property tax Reappraisal and the appropriate mitigation strategy was a major issue for the 2009 legislature. Montana’s residential property values have increased by 55% since the last state-wide reappraisal in 2003. This increase in property values has caused many Montanans to worry about a possible increase in their property taxes. The legislature was successful in mitigating property tax increases by using a formula that closely resembles the same mitigation strategy that was used back in the last reappraisal cycle.

In short, House Bill 648 continues the practice of a 6-year phase-in of tax rate

reductions, and exemption increases on Residential, Commercial, Agricultural and Forest land. We approved these lower tax rates, to help neutralize the impact of recent increased land and home market valuations. Of course, if the value of your own property has gone up dramatically, then you may have a slightly higher Property Tax bill. On a statewide basis however, 49.32% of property owners should see a decrease in Property taxes, and on the top end only about 16% should see an increase of more than \$15.00 per month. In some counties where property values have not risen so much, taxpayers will do better. In Treasure County for example,

60.41% should see a decrease in Property Taxes, and in Rosebud County it is projected that 59.73% will see taxes go down.

We also approved some Property Tax Assistance programs to protect those with the lowest incomes, to help the elderly and others who are truly in need. In this time of volatile property values, one of the more important innovations of the Property Tax bill was the inclusion of a two-year “look back”, a sales assessment study of residential home values so that if market values drop, the next legislature will have the data required to adjust to account for that decrease.



## Chairman for the Day

On the 22nd day of the session, it was Taylor Brown’s turn to serve as the Senate’s chairman for the Committee-of-the-Whole, to preside over the day’s votes for the bills on Second Reading. *It was an exhilarating experience* to be the one manning the gavel in front of so many of my long-time heroes”, said Brown, “And it was the first time my life to run a meeting according to ‘Mason’s Rules’ instead of ‘Robert’s Rules of Order’.”

During the afternoon while Brown was at the rostrum, the Senate debated such issues as Fish Wildlife and Parks land acquisition, the Castle Doctrine regarding the use of force in self defense, monitoring health care costs, and clarifying the ability of School Districts to share Superintendents and Principals.



Serving up Wheat Montana cinnamon rolls in the Capitol Rotunda (L to R) Martha Ostendorf-Miles City, Senator Taylor Brown, Lillian Ostendorf-Powderville, Mariah Bauman-MFBF Eastern MT Field Rep

## Montana Farm Bureau Women Promote Agriculture

Legislators at the capitol in Helena had a treat on the morning of Feb. 19, when members of the Montana Farm Bureau Women’s Leadership Committee served Wheat Montana cinnamon rolls, coffee and orange juice. The event was part of Food Check-Out Week, a national Farm Bureau event that celebrates the abundant, safe and affordable food that America’s farmers and ranchers produce. The committee in Helena not only had a display focusing on ag information but also collected food for the Ronald McDonald House.

Farm Bureau women served more than 300 plates of cinnamon rolls and had plenty of discussion about issues with legislators, covering everything from water to wolves—and, of course, food. “It was a great way to visit with people who pass our bills and let them know that most food in the U.S. is still produced on family farms, and that one farmer can feed 143 people,” said MFBWLC Chair Lillian Ostendorf. “In addition, the Food Check-Out Day theme this year was Stretching Your Food Dollar, so we offered tips on saving at the grocery store.”