



Gazette opinion: House stands up for open government

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On Jan. 21, we told Gazette readers about a Montana Public Service Commission's proposal to ignore its obligation to give public notice and hold public meetings before utility rate increases can take effect.

We are pleased to report that a strong bipartisan majority of 71 state representatives voted down House Bill 42, the plan to skip some PSC public notices and public hearings.

Speaking in opposition to HB42 at the start of debate on Thursday, Rep. Art Wittich, R-Bozeman, said: "Why does government exist? Does it exist for the convenience of the PSC? Does it exist for the convenience of monopoly utilities?" He continued: "I think this is a terrible bill. We should kill it."

A majority agreed and protected citizens' rights to be informed about what the PSC is doing and their right to participate in PSC decisions through public hearings.

Thanks to all the representatives voted against HB42, including, from Yellowstone County: Virginia Court, Jeff Essmann, Don Jones, Jessica Karjala, Kathy Kelker, Sarah Laszloffy, Margie MacDonald, Dale Mortensen, Kelly McCarthy, Carolyn Pease-Lopez and Daniel Zolnikov.