

Major Initiative I-184 Will Move Montana Toward a Clean and Healthy Green Economy

Rev. Ken Crouch of Billings announced that his proposed initiative, promoting renewable energy development, was determined to be “legally sufficient” by the Montana Chief Deputy Attorney General. It was authorized for signature gathering by the Secretary of State and assigned the number I-184. “That determination and authorization does not mean the AG or SOS favors or opposes the initiative,” he said, “only that the initiative has completed a rigorous vetting process required by law.”

“This cohesive renewable energy policy act will enable Montanans to join with 195 nations in meeting our obligations to steward our common earth home by reducing CO2 levels that are overheating Montana’s cropland,” said Rev Crouch, a Billings UCC minister and former city councilman.

“A Government Accounting Office Report requested by two bi-partisan US Senators just concluded that extreme weather events of the past decade have added more than \$350 billion in costs to taxpayers,” Crouch noted. “Scientists believe the primary cause of stronger storms is climate change made worse by greenhouse gases like CO2 from coal-fired power generation. So, if we don’t act now to reduce CO2, the report predicts taxpayers will be on the hook for \$12-\$35 billion more weather-related costs each year by the middle of the century. I-184 will help address that problem.” Crouch said.

“Warren Buffet’s MidAmerican Energy is installing 2 gigawatts of wind turbines without increasing backing capacity and without increasing electricity rates for 752,000 customers,” Crouch observed. “Buffett’s commitment will ensure electricity in Iowa will be 95% clean by 2020, far ahead of Montana’s 15%. It’ll create \$1.2 billion landowner easement and property tax payments from MidAmerican. We hope to adopt similar no fuel cost and no pollution control cost, clean electric generating capacity to help avoid the increasing wildfire and drought Montana’s farmers and tourists faced this summer.”

“Initiative 184 addresses this transition in a prudent manner that incorporates financial help for 1,900 Montana fossil fuel workers who will need to retrain as coal use diminishes. It does so while also protecting the 36,000 Montana farm, ranch, ski, sport fishing, and tourism jobs that are projected to be lost if we let our over-use of fossil fuel continue unabated,” Crouch noted.

MTCARES (Montana Community Affordable Renewable Energy Saves), a Montana non-profit, grassroots organization will be seeking 25,468 signatures supporting I-184. The initiative:

- 1) requires investor-owned utilities to gradually supply 50% of their electricity from renewable energy by 2030, 80% by 2050;
- 2) provides retraining, enhanced unemployment benefits, and pension support for fossil fuel workers displaced by the transition to clean energy;
- 3) requires safe grid interconnection of renewable projects, and construction and operation by Montana-preference labor earning prevailing-wages;

- 4) replaces lost coal tax and royalty revenues being experienced by state and local governments and the Crow tribe with a substitute tax that will not exceed 80% of the savings from converting to cheaper electric generation from the wind and sun;
- 5) revises the definition of “community renewable energy projects” by clarifying that energy and renewable energy credits may be bought and sold separately;
- 6) allows aggregate net metering while raising the cap on net metering to 100 kW for most and 250 kW for governments, churches and non-profits; and
- 7) allows neighbors to cooperate in creating renewable energy facilities to reduce the generation cost component in their bill while still paying their fair share of distribution and other costs associated with electric service.

Details can be found at <https://www.mtcares.org/explanation-of-initiative/> People may volunteer to gather signatures at www.mtcares.org or email gather@mtcares.org . (Hyperlinks removed; copy and paste if you want to use links.)

Signature Drive: If 25,468 signatures supporting the initiative are gathered statewide by June 22, 2018, the initiative will be on the fall 2018 ballot. If a majority of voters approve, it will become law.

Paid for by MTcares, Inc., Mike Mosolf, Treasurer, PO Box 494, Dillon, MT 59725, www.mtcares.org