

Press Release 700 words (without headline)

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MTCARES, LLC

Major Initiative I-187 Will Move Montana Toward a Clean and Healthy Green Economy

Rev. Ken Crouch and Karen Stears of Billings announced that their proposed initiative, promoting cheaper, renewable electricity, and providing retraining for fossil fuel workers and those in coal-dependent areas that are affected by the transition away from coal, was determined to be “legally sufficient” by the Montana Chief Deputy Attorney General. The Secretary of State then assigned it the number “I-187,” and authorized supporters to begin gathering 25,468 signatures by June 19, 2020 to put it on the 2020 ballot. “That determination and authorization does not mean the AG and SOS favor or oppose the initiative,” he said, “only that the initiative has completed the rigorous vetting process required by law.”

“This comprehensive renewable energy policy act will enable Montanans to join with 196 nations and almost every religion in meeting our obligations to steward our common earth home by reducing CO2 levels that are over-heating Montana’s cropland and trout streams,” said Rev Crouch, a Billings UCC minister and former city councilman.

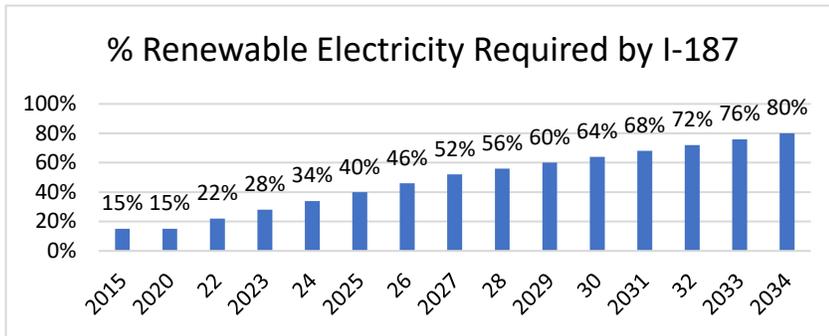
“A Government Accounting Office Report requested by US Senators Cantwell (D-Wash.) and Collins (R-Maine) recently concluded that extreme weather events of the past decade have added more than \$350 billion in costs to taxpayers,” Stears noted. “Scientists have established the primary cause of stronger 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-187 will help address that problem.” Stears said.

“Warren Buffet’s MidAmerican Energy is installing 2 gigawatts of wind turbines without increasing natural gas backing capacity and without increasing electricity rates for 752,000 customers,” Crouch observed. “88% of MidAmerican’s electrons came from renewables during the first three weeks of April this year. Buffett’s commitment will ensure electricity in Iowa will be 100% 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 wildfires and droughts Montanans have seen lately and to augment revenue in rural areas.”

“Initiative 187 addresses this transition in a prudent manner that incorporates financial help for 1,900 Montana fossil fuel workers and approximately 5,100 others in coal dependent communities and tribal areas 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,” Stears noted.

MTCARES (Montana Community Affordable Renewable Energy Saves), a Montana grassroots non-profit will be seeking 25,468 signatures supporting I-187. The initiative:

- 1) requires investor-owned utilities to gradually supply 52% of their electricity from renewable energy by 2027, 80% by 2034;



2) provides retraining, enhanced unemployment benefits, and pension support for fossil fuel workers and others in coal-dependent communities displaced by the transition to clean energy; 3) requires safe grid interconnection of renewable projects, and construction and operation by Montana labor,

earning prevailing wages;

- 4) replaces revenue lost from coal taxes and royalties that state and local governments and some tribes are experiencing, with a substitute tax that will not exceed 90% of the savings from converting to cheaper electric generation from the wind and sun;
- 5) clarifies that energy and renewable energy credits may be bought and sold separately to benefit rooftop solar development;
- 6) raises the cap on net metering to 100 kW for most, and 250 kW for governments, churches and non-profits--allowing them to produce their own electricity;
- 7) allows aggregate net metering to benefit farmers and others wishing to combine readings from more than one electric meter on their land, and
- 8) 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.

Additional details are at <https://www.mtcares.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/I-187-Explanation-2-page-green-sheet-1.pdf>. You may volunteer to gather signatures at www.mtcares.org or by emailing admin@mtcares.org. (Hyperlinks removed; copy and paste if you want to use links.)

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