# HB212: **Business Equipment Tax Exemption**

**What:** Increase the business equipment tax exemption from $300,000 to $1 million

**Why:** All kinds of businesses rely on expensive, specialized equipment for their operations. Under current statute, the first $300,000 of market value of business equipment is exempt from taxation. This change would increase that exemption to $1 million, meaning an additional 1700 Montana businesses would be exempt from paying taxes on their equipment.

# SB93: **Ballot Initiative Modernization**

**What:**

* Strengthen transparency and reporting requirements for ballot initiatives.
* Ballot initiative filing fee.
* Streamline agency review timelines.
* Prohibit electronic signatures.

**Why:** These changes maintain trust in ballot initiatives by ensuring legitimacy of proposed ballot initiatives, improving transparency in the process, and mandating financial reporting compliance.

# SB216: **Product Liability Reform**

**What:**

* Allows comparative fault defense when other parties contributed to the injury.
* Strengthens product misuse defense.
* Creates defenses for compliance with government safety regulations.
* Creates 10-year statute of repose.
* Creates innocent-seller defense for retailers that sold the product unchanged from the manufacturer.

**Why:** Common sense reforms to current product liability law protect manufacturers and Montana businesses.

# **SB269: Litigation Financing Consumer Protection**

**What:**

* Requires third-party litigation financers (TPLF) to register.
* Limits interest rates TPLFs can charge plaintiffs.
* Caps the share of recovery TPLFs can take from plaintiffs.
* Requires TPLFs to disclose involvement to all parties.
* Creates TPLF liability for court-ordered costs or penalties against the plaintiff.

**Why:** TPLF is a shadowy, $39 billion industry of hedge funds, wealthy individuals, and sovereign wealth funds investing in lawsuits in exchange for a share of any potential recovery. Without transparency, we can’t know the full extent of the problem or even when a third party is financing a case. These reforms protect consumers from predatory practices by TPLFs and improve transparency in our court system.

# **SB236: Set Standards for Time-Limited Demands**

**What:**

* Requires that time-limited settlement demand letters reasonably describe the claim, include relevant records, and allow 60 days for acceptance.
* Requires claimants provide reasonable records and information insurers need for timely, reasonable claims settlement.

**Why:** Trial lawyers frequently abuse time-limited settlement demand letters and withhold information necessary for insurance companies to settle claims fairly and expeditiously.

# **SB165: Insurance Claims Cooperation**

**What:**

* Requires claimants to cooperate with insurers investigating/adjusting claims.
* Replaces common-law bad faith claims with statutory rights

**Why:** Expedite reasonable claims adjustment and limit abusive practices by trial lawyers.

# **SB260: Captive Insurance Reform**

**What:** Align Montana Unfair Trade Practices Act (MCA 33-18-242) with model code and majority of states by eliminating application to captive insurers and self-insured where no conflict of interest exists between the insured and the insurer.

**Why:** Under current statute, a captive insurer or self-insured company can be subject to a bad faith claim merely for defending itself in a case. This amendment will remove unnecessary and counterproductive bad faith rules for captive insurers and self-insureds and will make Montana a more attractive captive-insured domicile.

# **SB279: Incentivize Fair Settlement Offers**

**What:** Increase the fair offer-of-settlement threshold from $50,000 to $3 million

**Why:** This would incentivize parties in more cases to settle at reasonable amounts instead of pursuing a trial and further clogging our court system. With this change, if a party does not settle, but then the final judgement is lower than/less favorable than the original settlement offer, the rejecting party must pay the offering party’s costs and legal fees.

This rule currently applies to contract and real property claims below $50,000. The new rule would raise that threshold to $3 million.

# **HB410: Service of Process Time Limit**

**What:** Reduce the time for service of process (the amount of time to serve a case after the case has been filed) down from three years to two years.

**Why:** With a three-year service of process timeline on top of the three-year statute of limitations, this allows a long period of time after an event before the defendant must be served. Shortening this time frame will make the process fairer for defendants. Businesses can better provide evidence for their defense soon after it happens, rather than three years after the claim was filed.

# **LC4513: Clarify Real Property Statute of Limitations**

**What:** Clarifies the statute of limitations for damage to real property to make clear that it does not reset with a new owner.

**Why:** This change clarifies that the statute of limitations starts when damage occurs and is known, regardless of whether the property changes ownership. This ensures that a damaged piece of real property cannot be sold simply to bring up a lawsuit if the statute of limitations has expired.