

NEWS RELEASE
GOVERNOR STEVE BULLOCK
STATE OF MONTANA

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Governor Signs Bill Protecting Private Property Rights

HELENA – Governor Steve Bullock on Wednesday signed into law a bill that adds a new layer of protection for private landowners in their negotiations with companies and government agencies that want to acquire their land under the state’s eminent domain laws.

“Montanans have a strong connection to the land, so it is important to all of us that we find a fair balance between respect for private property and responsible development,” Governor Bullock said. “We want safe, modern highways and reliable utility services, but we have to make sure we handle these projects in a way that respects Montana’s rural heritage and our farms and ranches.”

[House Bill 417](#), sponsored by Rep. Kelly Flynn (R-Townsend), requires that an agency negotiating to acquire a piece of property through eminent domain must make the owner a final written offer before beginning a condemnation action, and then include that offer in the legal proceedings initiating court action.

By clarifying which is the final offer, and by requiring that it be made in writing and early in the process, the new law provides greater certainty to landowners – ensuring that they understand exactly where they are in the condemnation process.

“This is a great compromise bill that has been worked on for over three years by landowners, conservation groups and other industry groups. It has the potential to lower litigation costs for property owners and condemners, and speeds up the timeline on resolving eminent domain disputes,” Rep. Flynn said. “This law is about the citizens of Montana. It’s about protecting their homes and their land, and it was widely supported by both sides of the aisle.”

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