



It's the sounds of traditional Irish music tonight at UM

■ Grizzlies get key win over Weber State. Page D1

FRIDAY

# Missoulian

Today's weather

COLD & BREEZY  
light snow  
High 29°/Low 22°  
Weather on Page C12

February 16, 2001 [www.missoulian.com](http://www.missoulian.com) 50 CENTS

## Panel sends major energy bill to Senate

**Bill would delay residential deregulation for five years**

**Associated Press**

HELENA — The Legislature's foremost proposal intended to end the practice of high electricity prices in Montana got the endorsement of a committee Thursday and advanced to the Senate.

The Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee voted 9-2 for a heavily amended

version of the bill sponsored by Sen. Royce Johnson, R-Billings.

Provisions include a five-year extension of the time in which Montana Power Co.'s residential customers are to enter an open market for electricity.

Committee member Johnson voted for his Senate Bill 243, but was cautious later when asked to assess its strengths and weaknesses, he said.

He acknowledged the power industry had a lot of influence in

January that it was imperfect and would need changes.

"My purpose was to get some action going," he said.

The amendments by the committee may not be the bills, last Johnson said, but more may well advance to the House, undergo changes there and be returned to the Senate for reconsideration, he said.

He acknowledged the power industry had a lot of influence in

bringing about the amendments now in place.

"It's a long way from being law," said Sen. Mark Cole, R-Hysham, chairman of the Energy and Telecommunications Committee.

"We did the very best we could over here on the Senate side."

Critics said the bill would not protect electricity consumers from

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**Snowstorm blows in**



**Pedestrians in Missoula's University Area braved fierce Helgat winds and blinding snow Thursday as a winter storm brought hazardous conditions to western Montana.**

**By JOHN STROMMES**  
of the Missoulian

POLSON — A bruising mid-February blizzard that blasted into western Montana and parts of Canada closed highways in several areas, including parts of Interstate 90 east of Missoula and over Macdonald Pass.

Schools and the airport in Missoula were closed, and many ski areas, however many schools, clinics and some government offices in Flathead and Lake counties were forced to shut down.

"This morning we were at zero visibility for most of the early morning."

**Snowplows struggle to keep up with blizzard that swoops into most of western Montana**

**By JOHN STROMMES**  
of the Missoulian

Snowplows were out in force, but did not gain on the blizzard until midafternoon.

"We didn't accomplish much," said Bob Smith, supervisor of plowing for 1,146 miles of Lake County roads. "It was blowing in as fast as we could plow it away."

Smith and his crew of 10 officials postponed the Western A high school basketball tournament for one day because of poor road conditions.

As of Thursday evening, Montana Highway 28 from Plains to 10 miles east of Garrison Junction, about 70 miles east of Missoula, was closed.

Mike Feldman, of the Montana Highway Patrol, said the accident occurred during low visibility when the tractor-trailer came up behind the plow and the pickup, which were traveling side by side. Feldman said the tractor-trailer

was destroyed in the wreck. The driver of the unit was also hospitalized after the crash.

Shortly after the initial wreck, Feldman said, a 1989 Chrysler New Yorker tried to go around the accident debris and was hit by a delivery truck. The New Yorker was on the shoulder and came to rest in the other lane of the highway, completely blocking I-90.

A second tractor-trailer unit came to a stop behind the accident scene, but was hit and demolished by a westbound van in a third accident. Feldman said a man and a woman in the van were hospitalized in Butte.

Feldman said I-90 westbound was closed for about four hours.

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**Woman killed in I-90 accident**

**By JOHN STROMMES**  
of the Missoulian

One woman was killed Thursday morning following a series of accidents caused by treacherous road conditions east of Missoula on Interstate 90 near Garrison.

A 51-year-old woman from out of state, whose name was not released, died at about 10:30 a.m. when her car, bound for Canada, hit a snowbank. She was a passenger in the car.

"It was blowing in as fast as we could plow it away."

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**Hospice Ball proceeds will go to foundation this year**

**Event has aided Partners in Home Care in the past**

**By GINNY MERRIAM**  
of the Missoulian

For 20 years, the annual Hospice Ball has raised money for Home Care's hospice program. This year, the proceeds will go to an independent foundation that will dole out grants to any applicant who provides end-of-life care and meets the board's approval.

This is a good idea, a bad idea or something in between, depending who you ask.

"It's all positive," said Kim McCampbell, a life insurance specialist who is co-chair of the ball

and one of the organizers of the new Hospice Care Foundation Inc.

"We're all striving for the same thing. All we want to do is put on the ball and do some fund raising with the larger corporations."

McCampbell, who is executive of the home health agency Partners in Home Care, said she can't and wouldn't stop the ball organizers, the Western Montana Association of Funeral Directors and Financial Advisors, from going independent. But she wants to be sure that donors understand that the money being raised is not going to the ball

Hospice and that the \$170,000 endowment is not earmarked for either the program or the agency.

"They hold the ball with the name Hospice," she said. "That is a good thing. It's a good idea. The people that attend this ball believe that they are contributing to Hospice. But the potential for me to tap this money is gone. Anything can apply."

Today, Partners in Home Care and the association (formerly the Life Underwriters) are not new. Until three years ago, proceeds from the ball went to the

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**Mardi Gras is theme for this year's event**

**By GINNY MERRIAM**  
of the Missoulian

Last year, the Hospice Ball raised about \$100,000. This year, they're aiming for \$150,000.

The perennial goal is funding care for people who are dying in Missoula. The immediate goal for Friday is dancing, food and fun, say the organizers.

"We originally wanted this to be a

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