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Form Montana Licensing Reform Task Force
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Montana Licensing Reform Task Force

This Task Force was created pursuant to Executive Order 1-2026 on January 29, 2026.

Purpose of the Licensing Reform Task Force

The Task Force shall provide the Governor with recommendations and strategies for the State of Montana to reform the professional occupational licensing system for the purposes of:

- identifying and removing burdens and barriers faced by licensees that are not necessary to protect the public; and
- improving access to and availability of professional services for citizens across Montana, including rural communities.

In developing recommendations and strategies, the Task Force shall seek input from Montana citizens, legislators, Montana associations whose members are licensed occupational professionals, professional licensing boards, relevant state agencies, advisory groups and researchers focused on occupational licensing, and other appropriate stakeholders as determined by the Task Force.

Public Record

Please note that all information received through this form is public record.

Which committee would you like to receive your comment?

Sunset Review Subcommittee

We want to hear from you!

We would like to receive any comments you would like the Task Force, or one of its subcommittees, to review. In addition, we are specifically looking for feedback for:

1. Specific topics a committee or the task force should consider, and
2. Specific people or organizations you think the task force should hear from.

Do you have a general comment or a specific person or topic for the Task Force to hear from?

Specific person or topic

What are your comments?

RE: Clarification regarding sunset provisions from 1977 - Massage Therapy was NOT sunset.

The Sunset Subcommittee will review the history of sunsets in Montana at their next meeting. I'd like to clarify what happened to massage therapy in the early 1980's, as I conducted a deep dive into this issue when massage therapists were considering reviving licensure in the 2000's.

It could appear that massage therapy was sunset in 1981, but that's NOT the case. The short version is that massage therapists actually chose not to renew their practice act to avoid being subjected to a burdensome fee that would have put many of them out of business.

The longer version:

In 1977, SB 162 instituted sunset reviews for all boards and agencies on a timetable over the following 6 years. SB 162 set termination dates for each board unless the legislature renewed that board's practice act based on the review of an interim sunset committee.

Massage therapy's review occurred in 1980, prior to the 1981 legislative session. The sunset review committee did NOT recommend sunsetting massage therapy. In 1981, HB 636, was introduced to continue licensing massage therapists and passed the House with no amendments. It was heavily amended in the Senate, with the House rejecting those amendments. After the conference committee, the sponsor moved to have the bill reconsidered on the 91st day, effectively killing the bill.

One of the sticking points was a senate amendment to add an on-going \$500 inspection fee – which in 2026 dollars would be \$1783. Massage therapists would rather let the profession become unregulated than be subject to this burdensome fee.

In 2009, massage therapy licensure was re-instituted when stakeholders in the profession reached consensus as to how to proceed in a manner that protected public safety while not creating burdensome barriers to practice. In 2025, Montana joined the massage therapy licensure compact, which would be jeopardized if the profession were sunset or deregulated, resulting in a negative impact on Montana workers.

As someone who has a deep institutional knowledge of the massage therapy profession in Montana, I'm happy to answer any of your questions. I can also provide hard copies of the legislative record concerning the events chronicled here should you request them.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Deborah Kimmet, M.S., LMT
