

MONTANA

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PUBLIC

EMPLOYEES

ASSOCIATION

DATE 1/24/05
HB 13

January 24, 2005

House Appropriations Committee

Re: HB 13

Chairman Buzzas and members of the House Appropriations Committee, my name is Tom Schneider and I am speaking on behalf of the 7000 members of the Montana Public Employees Association. MPEA is here to support amendments to HB 13 which will place into the bill the agreement which was negotiated with the administration and has been ratified by the 3500 members of our association who will be covered by this agreement. The amendments are also supported by the 1500 Montana University System members of MPEA who will be covered by the health insurance provisions and funding provided in the bill.

I want to make two quick points:

1. In 2003 the legislature passed a \$.25 per hour increase effective 1/1/2005 on the last day of the session. This process verified a long standing belief by state employees that their pay is used on the last day of the legislature to balance the budget. This time around the unions and both administrations have worked very hard to reach settlement very early in the process so the employees would not feel that their pay was the final action of the legislative session. You have a chance today to show them you care.
2. THIS IS A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. THIS IS A RATIFIED SETTLEMENT. THIS SETTLEMENT HELPS THE LOWER PAID EMPLOYEES!
The last time a flat dollar amount was included in the state employee pay package was in 1991 following a five day statewide strike. The strike settlement of 1991 also provided for a "blue ribbon commission" to look at state employee pay. The commission unanimously agreed to propose a "market based pay plan" which was agreed to by the employees. The problem was that the proposed plan had a \$120 million price tag and the legislature in 1993 only funded \$50 million. That's how Montana got to be 47th in the nation for state employee pay.

The members of MPEA are asking that you support the amendments to HB 13 and vote DO PASS.

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