

EXHIBIT 810  
DATE 3-2-05  
HB 417

Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony in favor of House Bill 417. For the record, I am Hal Stearns, Montanan.

Ironically, I am on the trail today, visiting community groups and school kids about the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

I am a life-long educator at both the high school and university levels. I have researched and written and presented history to thousands. All of my history interests, from the cowboy to Custer and Sitting Bull and homesteading, pales with the interest in the amazing saga of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Why does this moment in time, at the beginning of our country, capture the public imagination and interest?

The Expedition is our story. It is adventure and enthusiasm, the unknown spaces, meetings with 50+ tribes, noting new plants and animals, unimaginable difficulties, taking on the tough assignment, friendship, military operations. The expedition is our nation's greatest land expedition. It is early America's answer to our heading to the heavens in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

Montana has more of the trail, more of the adventures, more of the drama of the expedition than any other state. Montana is the magnet, the place people following along the trail want to visit. Montana's piece in the 2003-2006 nation-wide events is the ultimate "I got to be there" place. And much of the reason is our mystique as the Last Best Place.

To bring the story to life, to put our best foot forward, to add credence to the love affair we have in our state and that so many others across the continent dream about, we need to have funding. Adequate dollars must be in place.

As an historian, a life-long Montanan, an educator, story-teller, guide, I highly endorse HB 417. Thank you for your consideration.

Hal Stearns

Board member: Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Traveler's Rest Preservation Association, Immediate Past President of the Montana Lewis and Clark Commission.

*Hal Stearns* - proponent  
March 1, 2005