

EXHIBIT 2
DATE 3/23/05
SB 419

Taylor Middleton Testimony

Representative Galvin-Halcro and Committee Members,

My name is Taylor Middleton and I have lived in Big Sky for 25 years. I am the General Manager of Big Sky Resort where we employ over 875 workers during our peak periods.

Big Sky is a rapidly growing community. Thirty-five years ago we were just a bar and a dude ranch. Now, we have over 1,500 year-around residents. We have a school, Ophir, that provides K-8 education for 130 students. We have no high school, so our older children attend high school in Bozeman. Almost 3 hours of their day, five days a week, 180 days a year is spent commuting.

Sadly, many Montana communities have stagnant or declining populations. They are consolidating school districts and closing schools. Fortunately, some Montana communities are growing, and like Big Sky, have grown into the need for a high school.

The current moratorium prohibiting Montana communities from building new high schools is not in the best interest of Montana's children, or of Montana's communities, or of Montana's economy.

Montana's leaders are encouraging economic growth in our state. Not having a high school in Big Sky discourages economic growth. As an employer, it is harder to recruit the talented staff that we need, without a high school for their children to attend nearby.

For many families, the decision to move to Big Sky, or to continue residing in Big Sky, hinges on our not having a high school.

But, regardless of the economic effects of this issue, as a father first, and as a community member second, the most important reasons to support this bill are the children and their needs.

I am in support of SB 419 creating enabling legislation to allow communities to decide themselves if they need and want a high school.

Taylor Middleton