

EXHIBIT 9
DATE 3/23/05
SB 419

Caroline Henley Testimony

Representative Galvin-Halcro and Committee Members:

For the record, my name is Caroline Henley, and I have lived in Big Sky for 15 years. I have three children, the oldest will be ready for high school in two years; my youngest starts kindergarten next year. I am a working mother and my husband is a contractor.

Over the years, we have seen many friends struggle with what to do when their oldest child reaches high school age. They have tried many solutions: Some have bought second homes, some have sent their children to boarding schools, some have tried group parenting, some have had their children live with friends, some have established ski academies as a private school option, and some have even sold their businesses and their homes and moved to Bozeman—or left the state entirely. One thing is clear; however families have individually navigated their way from Big Sky to BHS, the transition has been neither smooth, easy, nor inexpensive. There is always collateral damage, both psychological and economic.

As my family considers what to do with our future. I am in a panic. In two years, we will have to decide whether to place our daughter on a bus, traveling a route littered with white crosses, each representing a fatality, or we will make the decision to quit our jobs, possibly sell our home and uproot our children who have been born and raised in Big Sky, placing them all in new schools. The life we have created and nurtured for ourselves and our children will have to be reinvented with new schools, new friends, new jobs, home and place of worship. A move effects very member of the family and every facet of their lives.

I want to stay in Montana and more importantly, Big Sky. SB#419 will give families living and raising children in Big Sky the hope that they will have to confront the decision to place a loved one on a perilous commute or to separate their family. Please give my community the support it needs in order to grow up alongside our children. Thank you.