

EXHIBIT 4
DATE 3.15.05
SR. 186

SB186 – legalizing non-cash prizes for big game contests (Sen. Joe Balyeat)

Mr. Chairman, members of the esteemed House FWP Committee for the record I'm Sen. Joe Balyeat. Today I bring SB186, to legalize the giving of non-cash certificates and prizes in big game antler competitions. We're talking about certificates, plaques, little trophies and awards – only low value, non-cash prizes.

You'll note that the bill is sponsored by many members from both Houses and both sides of the aisle – including Senate President Tester and House and Senate Chairmen Golie and Trepala.

I confess I'm bringing this bill to rectify a section of hunting law that I didn't even know existed a couple months ago.

Many Montanans are breaking the law currently.

Pope & Young isn't even legal. I've got several Pope & Young certificates myself, so I'm a criminal. SCI isn't even legal unless we pass this bill.

WE also need this change in the law to help those people who produce the outdoor shows around Montana. Unless they can offer certificates & awards for the "biggest buck", nobody will bring their big game trophies in and leave them at these shows for the weekend – people need an incentive to participate in these shows. (See pictures).

If you look at the FWP website, Why would we prevent the private sector from doing something that FWP seems to be encouraging on their website. Under current law, there's even inconsistency between "fish" & "game". Fishing contests perfectly legal; but game contests are not. In fact, FWP actually helps run fishing derbies around the state.

And in fact, unless they've changed their position since the Senate hearing, I don't think FWP has any problems with this bill either.

As the enclosed letter shows, they hold these contests in many states, and the organizers say they have no problems whatsoever with poaching. In fact, it's the other way around. These contests actually help wildlife officials police potential problems.

I ask that the committee "DO CONCUR" on this bill; that my written testimony be entered in the record, and I reserve the right to close.