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Rosebud county commissioners

Gary D. Fjelstad, Member

Joan K. Stahl, Member

Daniel D. Watson, Member

ROSEBUD COUNTY'S TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF INCREASED COAL BOARD FUNDING

EXHIBIT 7
DATE 01/06/2005
HB 2

Chairman Ripley and Members of the Committee:

Rosebud County would like to go on record encouraging increased funding in the next biennium to the Montana Coal Board. Rosebud County feels with the anticipated increased activity in the Coal industry, that more impact funds are going to be needed to adequately address funding requests.

Rosebud County would ask your support to return the Coal Board Funding to the 2003 biennium level which was \$1,967,784 and the Department of Commerce's original request. The Montana Coal Board, in our opinion, has been under funded in the last several bienniums to meet the impacts that have been incurred by cities and counties.

For instance, in the last legislative session, Rosebud County had proposed legislation for increased Coal Board funding for Castle Rock Road; which serves Western Energy Company's Rosebud Mine and is the states largest coal producing mine. The Coal Board approved a grant of \$100,000 for engineering on this project; however the previous Legislature did not authorize the additional funds for any construction. In response to the coal impact traffic and the overall mining impact on this road, Rosebud County spent in excess of \$380,000 in the last fiscal year on extending pavement and chip sealing existing asphalt.

Rosebud County is of the opinion that the impact on this road is in direct relation with the on going mining activity in Rosebud and Big Horn Counties and that impact funds are the appropriate source of funding for this type of infrastructure need.

We have provided just one example of direct impacts that have gone unfunded and there have been many other impact projects that have also not received funding requested. Rosebud County would respectfully ask this Committee to increase funding to the Montana Coal Board.

ROSEBUD COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Gary D. Fjelstad, Chairman
Joan K. Stahl, Member
Daniel D. Watson, Member