

January 24, 2005

EXHIBIT 3  
DATE 1/24/05  
HB 324

Montana House Judiciary Committee

Dear Members of the Committee:

I respectfully urge you to pass House Bill 324. As an employee of Blue Mountain Clinic since 1989, I present myself earnestly and honestly in order that my testimony will help the passage of this bill.

This bill is not about eliminating the rights of those who protest abortion. Indeed, no one wishes that the fundamental right to free speech and to demonstrate be taken away. What this is about, however, is that citizens be able to access their places of employment or their health care professional without the fear of intimidation and harassment. This bill helps protect that people have the right to access health care without invasion of privacy.

This bill is the right thing to do.

Across the nation, acts of violence toward physicians and clinics are real: arsons, chemical attacks, assassination attempts, anthrax threats and ultimately murders are actual atrocities that have occurred in the United States. While no one accuses the people who protest at Blue Mountain Clinic of committing these horrendous acts, one cannot help but fear that someone, sometime might be capable of carrying out this kind of homegrown terrorism. It has been done before and Blue Mountain Clinic has been a target.

In November of 1989 and again in November of 1991, Blue Mountain Clinic was the target of Operation Rescue, an attempt to physically blockade the doors in order that no one enter to access services. Some of my co-workers were injured and our patients were traumatized. On March 29, 1993 I was awakened in the early morning with a phone call, a co-worker notifying me that the clinic had been fire-bombed and completely destroyed. I was dumbfounded, even though we had been picketed and harassed for years. I couldn't believe that this kind of terrorist act had occurred in my town, at my clinic.

Each day when I arrive at or leave my place of employment I cannot let down my guard. I must assess my surroundings, looking for people or things that are out of the ordinary. I watch for cars that might be following me home, taking alternate routes in order that my routine might be more difficult to predict. I worry that my pets might be targets, as they have been in other cities. Purchasing and carrying a cell phone at all times has become a necessary part of my life, only in that I might access 911 at any given moment.

Protesting something that you believe in is a part of being an American and should never be taken away. However, when a woman bringing in her sick child into the clinic for an appointment is yelled at, pleading her to not kill her baby, how is that felt by both her and her child? Certainly this is not perceived as freedom of expression but as a personal assault. By passing House Bill 324, citizens may protest, but others may access their health care without harassment and invasion of privacy.

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