

EXHIBIT 2
DATE 3/27/08
SB 18

TESTIMONY
SB18

Chair Rice and members of the committee, I am Joe Skinner, a county commissioner from Gallatin County. I am here to voice unanimous support of this bill from the Gallatin County Commission.

As County Commissioners we well understand the realities of budget constraints. We have rarely asked the state for more budget resources, but the tremendous growth in Gallatin County over the last fifteen years has put tremendous pressures on our criminal justice system and the next practical step would be an additional District Court Judge. We have already taken steps in Gallatin County to respond to these challenges of growth. In the last two years we have been involved in a process to revamp the County's criminal justice system. Working with nationally recognized consultants we have created new departments including Court Services and Public Defenders as well as instituting new programs such as work release and treatment court. We have also created, with the help of consultants, a 20-year space and facilities plan which recommends not three but four district court judges. As you can see, we are definitely committed to improvement and the next logical and necessary step in making the entire system more efficient is to have an additional district court judge. This would spread out the workload from our current overworked district judges and would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the entire system.

If you officially create a 3rd District Court for Gallatin County, we are committed as a local government to supply the courtroom and necessary administrative space. The Gallatin County Commission is committed to do our part to address the challenges we face, we are respectfully requesting that the legislature assist us with this pressing need. Thank you for your attention.