

Good afternoon Chairman Noennig and members of the Committee. I am Richard Roehm, and I live south of Bozeman. I am currently a member of the Gallatin Airport Authority, and have been for the last 13 years. I oppose the proposal before this Committee.

Representative Wells has raised an issue that must have been considered by the framers of our State Constitution. The Constitutional Convention recognized that our representative form of government best serves citizens by having elected officials in **most** bodies. However, they also recognized that some boards and commissions that must control and supervise **technically complex or mission specific institutions** function best outside the immediate influences of partisan interests or direct citizen pressure. I believe Airport Authorities fall within this category and function best with appointed volunteer officials who serve without compensation.

The Montana Aeronautics Commission recognized the success of Airport Authorities in other states, and in the early 70's sponsored legislation that ultimately became 67-11-103 MCA. Of the approximately 118 Montana public airports, ten authorities govern 13 airports. None have elected commissioners. These airport authorities are in almost all of our major cities; Great Falls, Missoula, Kalispell, Butte, Bozeman and Helena, to name a few.

In my view, the issue to this Committee is whether the Legislature ought to impose an elected official style of governance onto the existing ten Montana Airport Authorities, all of which currently have appointed members. The appointed model has served our major Montana cities well for over two decades and more closely satisfies the oversight need for a business orientated and technically complex airport system. Further, all these Airport Authority members are appointed by **elected** officials who have a direct political and economic stake to ensure the airports are effectively managed and supervised. The current airport authority statute has worked well and has resulted in a diverse governing group representing the entire community. Appointed volunteer members who serve without compensation have a good record of being engaged, stimulated, and motivated to serve all the flying public and to work for current and future generations. Accountability to the public has not been sacrificed.

Our major airports serve all Montanans, and many more outside the State. They facilitate business and cultural interests and act as economic engines contributing to our common benefit. "Stakeholders" in our airfields go way beyond the immediate "region" of each airport. Montana is equidistant from at least four major aviation hubs (Minneapolis, Denver, Salt Lake City, and Seattle). These hubs directly and efficiently funnel citizens from all nations into our state. We need to take care that we not impede citizen access or disrupt the efficient management of our aviation facilities.

I believe the concept of designating a "region" to be served by the airport authority and having members elected from the electorate of that region artificially limits the scope of interest of commissioners and would narrow the consideration of issues. No single class of user is, nor should be, unduly influential in the policy-making boards that supervise our airports. If we wanted to choose a governance model that would narrow airport management considerations by introducing local pressures on decisions, we would choose to have airport authority members elected. Politicization, self-interest, inefficiency and user-myopia must not be allowed to darken a bright and shining spot in the Montana economy.

The system is not broken and does not need a fix. I urge the Committee to reject the proposed amendment to the current airport authority statute.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Tuesday, Feb. 1, 1500 Rm. 172, Local Government Committee
Amend MCA 67-11-102, Rep. Jack Wells, HB 384