

Winifred Rural Assistant Fire
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House Committee of Local Government

Please consider HB538 and recognize the fact that it will be a significant non-tax benefit to the most under funded over worked non paid volunteer departments in our state.

Since HB538 allows our emergency departments that are already collecting donations to purchase equipment to save lives, whether it's the Jaws of life to save a passing motorists life or an engine overhaul on a twenty or thirty year old fire truck that is the only line of defense for a farm family with a raging forest or prairie fire headed there direction. The funds that are raised go to our first line of defense. Please also recognize that for so many of our local departments the people serving there not only spend their own money and time to receive there 30 hours of annual training, or in the case of our volunteer EMT's the 120 hours of up front training before they face the annually required additional hours, these people then have to go out and raise through fund raisers, donations, and grants a significant amount of money for equipment.

HB 538 will allow many of Emergency Service departments the opportunity to utilize the proceeds from one either sex elk permit to generate funds from people who will enthusiastically spend money for the opportunity to hunt in that district. Those of us in emergency services also recognize the fact that a significant amount of the expense we incur on an annual basis comes from those who are outdoor recreationalists. For example, the summer floaters who have caused us to send our fire department, to extinguish fires from individuals who refused to use the out houses and then felt the way to dispose of the toilet paper was to burn it, taking with it the surrounding timber. Our unpaid volunteers have also spent hours away from there businesses waiting for injured boaters to meet them at a road access point on the river. Our volunteers have also spent countless hours looking for lost or injured hunters.

The point to all of these examples is the fact that none of these people have or ever will contribute to the work or the expense of maintaining these local emergency service departments. We believe that by having a fund raising tool that will bring in financial support from those who enjoy the recreational benefits that our rural communities create, will not only help to compensate for the expense we have been forced to carry, but will also create a positive relationship between those who visit our area and those who live there.

The other point that I would like to make is that many of the land owners who expend thousands of dollars annually to care for the wild life, would like to see at least some benefit for their donation to the public for the care and maintenance of these large

wildlife herds. With the ability to raise money from one either Elk Sex permit per hunting district these land owners would be receiving better emergency services with out raising taxes. HB 538 is an opportunity to create a positive relationship between Fish and Game, outdoor recreationalists, and the thousands of Montana land owners, which Montana Fish and game, and sportsmen depend on to care for Montana's wildlife.

I would like to ask for your vote of support for Montana's many dedicated emergency service volunteers who will be there to pull you out of a mangled car, or put there lives in-between a raging fire and your loved ones and your personal property.

Thank for your consideration.

Winifred Rural Fire Chief & past member of Winifred Ambulance Service
Trevis M Butcher