



EXHIBIT 12  
DATE 3/29/05  
SB 456

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March 29, 2005

Representative Mark Noenning, Chair  
House Local Government Committee  
Helena, MT

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Subject: **SB 456**

As a private fire protection consultant and former Montana State Fire Marshal, I rise in opposition to SB 456. SB 456 would eliminate potential tools for local government use in reducing the escalating fire suppression costs in wildland-urban interface fires and reducing the overall fire protection costs to local government entities.

In the wildland-urban interface the two most significant tools in minimizing the costs of protecting homes in the interface are:

- Built in defensibility of the structure, i.e., a fire resistant roof covering and fire resistant construction; and
- Defensible space around the home.

The benchmark for structure protection in a wildland-urban interface fire is 1 engine per house! If they can be eliminated because of built-in protection these are costs that the Montana Department of Natural Resource and Conservation or local governments will not have to pay.

Residential sprinkler ordinances are another tool that local governments can use to reduce fire protection costs to local government entities. By adopting residential sprinkler ordinances, local governments can reduce the cost of the fire protection infrastructure to fire departments and to developers. If a fire department can eliminate the purchase of a fire engine they save \$200,000 or more. Many local governments provide trade-offs to developers when sprinklers are provided in a development which substantially reduce the cost to the developer, e.g., increased hydrant spacing, reduced fire flows, narrower streets, longer cul-de-sacs, and etc.

I urge you to vote "**DO NOT PASS**" on this bill, which would eliminate essential tools for controlling fire protection costs for both the State of Montana and local governments throughout Montana.

Sincerely,

Bruce Suenram  
President