

MontPIRG

MONTANA PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP

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EXHIBIT

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DATE 3-23-05

HR 793

MontPIRG Testimony In Favor of HB 793

March 22, 2005

Dear Chairman Peterson and members of the House Natural Resources Committee,

I am writing you to voice MontPIRG's support for HB 793. We see this bill as a smart and manageable way to help increase recycling rates in the state of Montana.

Before I tell you why we like this bill, I want to talk about why we should be concerned with recycling. Recycling is, on one level, a choice made by people who value conservation. People recycle because they believe in limiting impacts of human activity on our environment. There is, however, an economic reason to recycle as well, particularly in the case of aluminum.

As many of you know, the manufacturing of aluminum requires large amounts of electricity. In fact, it takes 7.5 kilowatt hours of electricity to make one pound of aluminum from bauxite. Recycling aluminum saves 95 percent of the energy needed to manufacture aluminum from raw bauxite. That not only translates into environmental benefits, but helps to strengthen our economy as well. Lessening electricity consumption from such a large consumers as the aluminum industry helps to avoid rising electricity costs. These days, we are all too familiar with the profound impacts on businesses and families that rising electricity rates can have.

According to EPA data, Montana currently recycles less than ten percent of our solid waste. That ranks us among the bottom three states nationally. As a large rural state, Montana faces challenges in establishing systems to achieve high rates of recycling, but we can certainly do better than ten percent.

States with highly effective recycling systems often employ either "bottle bills" or solid waste fees to generate financial resources to support their recycling systems. As with most problems, a major factor in the lack of recycling in Montana is the lack of financial resources. HB 793 will generate an estimated \$2 to 2.4 million that will help to improve recycling in Montana. Furthermore, this bill does this without creating a new expensive and complex system for collecting those funds. Instead, it uses the existing landfill fee.

I am well aware that lawmakers are wary of passing any form of a tax increase, and this bill will meet resistance based on that concern. But I would encourage you to consider the economic benefits of recycling. Money spent on recycling can pay for itself through reduced landfill costs, energy savings, and the sale of valuable recycled materials. The additional landfill fee is merely a way to get the ball rolling. However, once the system is in place, it can begin to pay for itself. That is why the charge established in HB 793 will sunset after four years.

In order to improve recycling in Montana and invest in the future of our state, I ask that you give HB 793 a do pass recommendation. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Montana Public Interest Research Group (MontPIRG) and our 4500 members.

Sincerely,

Matt Leow
Executive Director