



WE

Women's Voices For The Earth

CELEBRATING
10 YEARS OF
WORKING TO
CREATE AN
ECOLOGICALLY
SUSTAINABLE
AND SOCIALLY
JUST SOCIETY.

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EXHIBIT 4
DATE 4.1.05
SB 236

April 1, 2005

Chairman Peterson and members of the House Natural Resources Committee,

My name is Alexandra Gorman. I am the Director of Science and Research for Women's Voices for the Earth, an environmental health non-profit organization representing 500 Montana members from across the state.

We can all agree that no one wants high levels of carcinogens in Montana waters. Ideally we don't really want any carcinogens in our water, but they are there for a variety of reasons, both man-made and naturally occurring. We have left it to government to regulate the acceptable maximum water standards for these toxic pollutants.

Unfortunately, we do not currently have complete information. We simply don't know how many cancers are being caused by the carcinogens in our environment. Take breast cancer for example, 50-70% of breast cancer cases happen in women with no known risk factors - it doesn't run in the family, they're not smokers, they haven't taken hormone replacement therapy. Colorectal cancer is the same - 75% of cases have no identifiable risk factor. How many people do you know who have been diagnosed with cancer, but cannot explain why they got it? This leaves a lot of room for the potential that environmental carcinogens may be causing or contributing to these unexplained cancers. This means that reducing the levels of carcinogens we are exposed to could make a real dent in reducing the burden of cancer in our state.

And while we don't have complete information, new research is coming out every day. Lots of research is being done on this topic right now. I've seen research published last year out of Taiwan on the connections between arsenic levels in water and liver cancer in women. A study was done in California looking at perchlorate and trichlorethylene in water and the associations with uterine cancer and skin melanoma. In 2003 there was a study published on nitrate in water and the potential for susceptible populations to have increased colon cancer rates. What we know about carcinogens is changing every day.

What this bill does is give Montana some additional flexibility to reduce the burden of cancer locally - in response to the latest and best science - without having to wait for the slow wheels of federal government to turn. We should give our state the authority to prevent cancers before they happen. I encourage you to support SB 236.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Gorman
Director of Science and Research
Women's Voices for the Earth