

EXHIBIT 7
DATE _____
HB 166

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I would again like to thank you for your time this morning. For the record, my name is Jessica Grennan and I represent the Associated Students of the University of Montana in Missoula. I come here again today on behalf of ASUM in strong support of House Bill 166.

As the law currently stands, no more than four of the seven regents can be a member of the same political party. Current law also states the student regent is not counted in the partisan total. By denying that students can have partisan affiliation, the law creates a board that can be dominated by a single political party. It is currently possible for five of the seven members of the Board of Regents to belong to the same political party. The spirit and intent of the Board of Regents is to go past political parties to develop strong, independent higher education policy. By potentially stacking the deck with one party, we are undermining the independent nature of the board of regents.

This bill is designed to make another level of government transparent and to ensure a balanced Board of Regents, one focused on strong decision-making rather than party lines. By acknowledging that students may also have political preferences we are creating a more honest and balanced Board of Regents.

For all of these reasons, the Associated Students of the University of Montana strongly recommend a do pass recommendation for House Bill 166.

I will be here for the remaining portion of the committee hearing and will be happy to answer any questions. Thank you for your time today.