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Testimony for HB184
January 18, 2005
House State Administration Committee
Darlene Staffeldt
Montana State Librarian
406-444-3115

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, for the record my name is Darlene Staffeldt and I am your State Librarian. I thank you for your time and attention here today and I want to Thank Representative Dave McAlpin for carrying this bill for us.

There are six Federations across the state. Library federations were first developed in 1956. The Mother of Montana's Federations, one of Montana's premier Librarians, Inez Herrig, passed away a couple weeks ago at the age of 94. Inez and other early federation planners believed that the great distances and sparse population of Montana shouldn't result in low quality library services, and that the limited services available from small public libraries would be strengthened and improved through cooperative programs.

The original goals of the federations were to develop innovative, cooperative programs for efficient delivery of library services and to provide technical assistance, programming services and support for public libraries throughout the state.

Today all public libraries and many other types of libraries belong to one of six federations which provide services (resource sharing, reference back up, continuing education opportunities, financial support for joint purchases, and individual grants to improve federation-wide library services to Montana citizens) based on these same goals.

Federations are voluntary associations of libraries supported by local and state funding. The purpose of federations is to combine resources to improve library services to residents of the federations. Federation law was first adopted in 1947 and has been updated last in 2001.

Current Federation coordinators, members of the State Library Commission and staff, six federation members, and three public library trustees formed an ad hoc committee to look into the current structure of federations and voted to make these changes.

Changes:

- (1) Montana Code Annotated are available via the internet and have not been distributed to federation headquarters libraries for some time now. This change makes law and current practice match.
- (2) The proposed legislation gives the responsibility for the establishment of the federation to the State Library Commission. Currently, the establishment of the federation rests in a contractual relationship between the local headquarters library and the members. The proposed changes allow the Commission to establish federations.

Current statutes already give the Commission the responsibility of selecting the headquarters library and the federation's boundaries.

- (3) No contract, association is voluntary and managed by a board and bylaws.
- (4) The Board of Trustees and Library Director of the federation headquarter library currently administers federations. When federations were established, the largest library in the area was typically the federation headquarters because this library had the most resources, both books and professional help, to share with members. With the advent of shared catalog systems, the provision of professional advice from the State Library, and the decrease in state funding for federations, the services of the largest libraries are no longer necessary or available for federation development.
- (5) The proposed legislation eliminates the requirement for a headquarters library and allows the membership to elect a federation coordinator and a board of trustees. The proposal relieves the solo local board of trustees and director from the burden of federation administration and makes the administration a shared responsibility among members. The bylaws adopted by federation members would govern coordinator selection.

This proposal does not change the:

- Eligibility of libraries to join federations
- Fiscal accountability, through reporting and audits required of federations
- Amount of funding to federations, which is appropriated by the legislature through HB2

The proposal does allow the

- membership to select its coordinator
- coordinator job to be shared among participating libraries

Please support HB184 as it will help Montana's Federations of libraries to continue to do a great job of providing cooperative services and products for all Montana Library users. Thank you for your time.