

EXHIBIT ~~7~~
DATE 3-30-05
SB 396

Closing – SB 396 (Sen. Joe Balyeat)

As I pointed out, Senator Ellingson has a much more expansive bill dealing with this same problem – attempting public financing of justice races. You may ask why do we need SB 396 with Sen. Ellingson’s bill out there. 2 reasons: 1) Sen. Ellingson’s bill cost a lot of money; and there’s no guarantee it will pass and be signed into law. 2) Even if his bill does pass; it is only a voluntary approach. SB 396 would still apply to those candidates who don’t opt for public financing. So this bill would integrate nicely with Sen. Ellingson’s bill and would serve a very good purpose. We need to do something about Supreme Court races in MT. There is increasing public cynicism about justice elections – growing sentiment that “justice is for sale in Montana.” Whether or not you agree with that sentiment, Sen. Ellingson and I agree that we need to avoid even the appearance if impropriety in our judicial system; and that’s why I’d urge that this committee “do concur” in SB 396. Thank you for a good hearing.