



EXHIBIT 3  
DATE 4-6-05  
SB 319

Mr. Chairman and members of the House State Administration Committee,

I am Rita Blouke co-president of the Helena League of Women Voters, here today on behalf of the LWV of Montana, to speak in favor of SB 319. The League supports SB 319 because we believe voluntary public financing of candidates for the Montana Supreme Court removes the corrupting influence of special interest campaign contributions. The League has a long history of promoting informed and active participation of citizens in government and has helped lead efforts to bring about federal campaign finance reform. In North Carolina, the League was a member of the coalition that instituted public financing for Supreme Court justices, which was rated by candidates as a huge success in the November elections.

Montana citizens need to have confidence that the Montana Supreme Court will uphold the Constitution and the laws of our state in a fair and impartial manner, apart from any personal or special interest. Supreme Court candidates in Montana run as nonpartisan candidates for that very reason. But Montana has seen increasingly large amounts of money enter Supreme Court races. It is part of a national trend in which outside interests are seeking to influence our judicial elections. And it leaves an unhealthy and creeping pall over the Court and the decisions it makes.

The increasingly high costs of running can discourage qualified judicial candidates from even entering the race without personal wealth or organized financial backing. Yet our judicial decisions can not be left to just the rich or to those backed by special interests. Montanans want to have judgments weighed from the common sense perspective of the average citizen.

We believe public financing of qualified candidates for the Montana Supreme Court will help to alleviate these problems. And we think Montanans will support the bill and the general fund expenditure to ensure the impartiality, fairness and independence of Montana's Supreme Court.

Please support Senate Bill 319.

Thank you. Rita Blouke,

Member, Legislative Steering Committee  
of the League of Women Voters of Montana