



EXHIBIT 6
DATE 2.9.05
HB 482

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SouthEastern Montana Development Corporation

Growing Montana ~ One Job at a Time

February 8, 2005

Representative Karl Waitschies, Chairman
House Taxation Committee
Helena, MT

Dear Chairman Waitschies:

Thank you for the opportunity today to express my opinions concerning HB 482 through this letter.

As an economic development professional that lives and works in **Coal Country**, I see the needs and impacts that coal development can bring on a daily basis. **It is with that experience that I support HB 482 and encourage the Committee and yourself to raise the Shared Account percentage of the Coal Severance Tax back to the original 8.36 percent, at a minimum!**

Montana has basically four (4) counties that dig coal. How many millions of dollars have these four (4) counties put into the state coffers? The **Coal Board** funds are one of the few resources that are available or potentially available to assist small impacted communities and counties in **Coal Country**.

These **Coal Board** funds are like to proverbial "cookie jar." Lately there are fewer and fewer cookies in that jar with more and more hands dipping into it. If only a handful of proposed coal projects come on-line, these limited and shrinking funds will pit community against community, neighbor verses neighbor.

Mr. Chairman, I assure you that we are digging coal as fast as we can at Colstrip to keep those funds flowing into the state coffers. But, we need additional funds coming back to **Coal Country** through the **Coal Board** to assist us with those impacts, as the current funding level is not adequate. **That is why I support HB 482 and encourage the Committee to restore the Shared Account percentage of the Coal Severance tax back to the original 8.36 percent at a minimum!**

Sincerely:

Jim Atchison
Executive Director
Southeastern Montana Development Corporation
Colstrip