

## Testimony

SB 152 / 2005 session

To: Senate Education Committee

By Steve Meloy/ Executive Secretary/ Montana Board of Public Education

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Steve Meloy and I am Executive Secretary of the Montana Board of Public Education. On behalf of the Board, I would like to offer informational testimony on SB 152.

As you are all probably aware the constitutionally provided for, seven-member, governor appointed board is responsible for exercising general supervision over the public school system. The board takes this responsibility very seriously and its actions over the past few years are illustrative of its desire to keep our standards contemporary. In 2002 the Board of Public Education completed a four-year project to completely revise all of its categories of accreditation in order to assure that all school programs would result in quality educational opportunity for all of Montana's children. In 2002 the Board also completed a two-year review of the certifications standards for teachers to assure that our teaching workforce remains one of the best in the United States. In 2003 the Board overhauled its distant learning rules to remain contemporary with the rapidly changing technology regarding online teaching. The Board has a current fully engaged and contemporary strategic five-year plan, which extends through July 2008.

The Board fully appreciates any endeavor and attempt regarding equity and quality issues in which this legislature engages specifically in response to the current lawsuit. Because of our understanding of our important role as a constitutionally independent policymaker, we will rise in every hearing on any effort to define quality to ask that the unmodified court findings regarding the Board's responsibility be codified as a part of a definition of quality.

Specifically, we ask that the *Helena Elementary v. State*, 236 Mont. 44, 57 (1989) that concludes that the Montana School Accreditation standards are minimum standards upon which quality education must be built become a part of any bill that you consider in this regard.

The Board does not intend to be provocative in this request but only to restate what the courts have indicated as our responsibility. The Board has made itself available to every request to come to the table in any effort to define the components of a basic system of free quality public, elementary and secondary schools, and will continue to do so. Thank you for your consideration in this regard.