

Senator Ryan and Committee Members:

For the record, I am Mike Scholz, a Big Sky resident of 33 years, and the owner of Buck's T-4 Lodge.

1. My wife and I just married two years ago. We will have three children in high school next year. Prior to marrying, the complications of having children attending school forty miles away from home weighted heavy on our committing to marriage and my wife moving to Big Sky. Obviously, we decided the situation was not insurmountable, but I know of many other families that have decided against living in Big Sky because of the same considerations.

2. Once we married, thought was given to having a second home in Bozeman. We decided it best for our family with two working parents to not separate our family and inevitably leave our children without the supervision that is normal for high school age children. Consequently, their ability to participate in extracurricular school activities suffers.

3. The two and a half hours a day required to commute to and from Bozeman for school is not only a burden, but also an unproductive use of a young person's time. If the time riding to school is totaled up, I'm sure the students spend the equivalent of eight forty-hour weeks over a year just riding the bus. Not what you would desire for your children, if you had a choice.

4. Several years ago, when a high school was first mentioned I must admit I was skeptical about the ability to offer the students a broad enough curriculum of studies and activities. Upon experiencing our children's studies and activities at both our local middle school and the Bozeman High School, I have come to conclude that perhaps their ability to participate is enhanced in a small school environment and a smaller more focused curriculum can actually better prepare them for life ahead.

Over my thirty years in business in Big Sky, I've watched this community support its educations system by always passing needed bond issues, expanding when appropriate, and striving for a quality education. This process is only a further extension of that commitment to the children of our community. For these reasons and more, I encourage you to vote yes on giving communities the ability to create a high school, if they find it prudent to do so.

Mike Scholz