

**MONTANA 59TH LEGISLATURE
SENATE FINANCE & CLAIMS COMMITTEE**

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 60
April 11, 2005

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Ed Thamke and I am Chief of DEQ's Waste & Underground Tank Management Bureau. If this legislation were successful, the methamphetamine cleanup program would be administered within the Bureau. I am here to testify in support of HB 60.

The DEQ started receiving complaints and inquiries about pollution associated with meth labs in 1997. DEQ was initially resistant to get involved with the cleanup of meth labs because the environmental laws administered by the Department do not relate to indoor pollution. We regulate sources that may pollute the outdoor environment. The Department does not currently have the authority, standards or expertise to regulate indoor environmental contamination and to understand the potential toxicological impacts to human health.

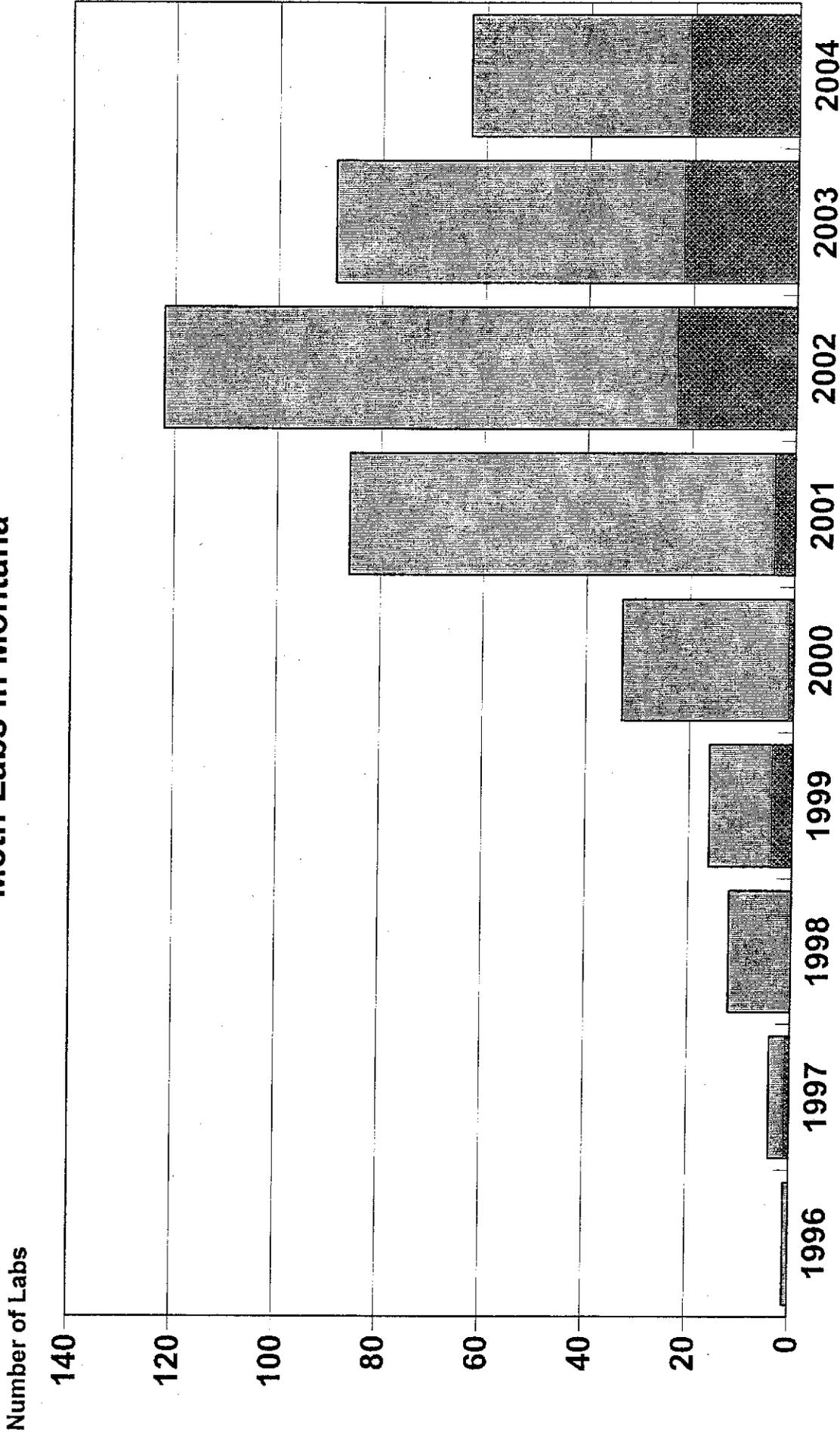
Since 1996 the Montana Department of Justice reports 426 methamphetamine drug lab busts. Seventy-six meth labs were reported to the Department of Environmental Quality during this time frame. Currently, when a meth lab is busted, HazMat teams funded by the federal Drug Enforcement Agency remove and properly dispose of hazardous waste discovered at the drug lab. DEQ's involvement has been limited to sites where chemicals have been dumped into the environment, onto the ground, into a stream, or into a sewage system.

Thankfully there have not been any sites where the outdoor pollution from a meth lab has been significant. However, the owners of the structure are left without any guidance from the state agencies or local health departments on how to deal with the interior of a home or building that may be contaminated with residual chemicals from meth manufacturing.

HB 60 creates and funds a program to address this need. Most importantly, HB 60 establishes a decontamination standard for methamphetamine. HB 60 creates a program within the DEQ to train and certify meth lab cleanup contractors. If HB 60 is passed, DEQ will hire an Occupational Health and Safety Specialist with half-time administrative support to develop a training and certification program; to develop standard methods for the assessment, testing and remediation of contaminated properties; and to pursue grant opportunities to help fund the program. In accordance with HB 60, DEQ will also establish procedures to list and remove sites from the required web-based list of contaminated properties.

Passage of HB 60 will help address the concerns about indoor pollution from meth labs and provide a process for owners to have their property cleaned up. The Department of Environmental Quality supports HB 60 and requests a do-pass vote. Mr. Chairman, that concludes my testimony and I will remain available for questions.

Meth Labs In Montana



Fiscal Year

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Labs Reported to DEQ	0	1	0	4	1	4	23	22	21
Total Labs Per Fiscal Year	1	4	12	16	33	86	122	89	63
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> ■ Labs Reported to DEQ ■ Total Labs Per Fiscal Year </div>									