9:30 Supreme Court Chamber

Exhibit No. 3
Date 1-20-03
Bill No. SB 80

Open Container Bill – SB 80

When I was a child, I acted like a child, I did foolish things. When I was a young man, I took chances and did risky things wiser people questioned.

I grew up in a culture that did not question such dangerous habits such as driving without a seat belt or drinking while driving. The risk was not assessed or even thought of.

As human beings we have evolved, we have learned from previous generations and therefore no longer do things that were once done, things that are now thought of as dangerous or foolish.

We have matured, and with maturity our laws must change. It is no longer acceptable for the State of Montana to allow people to drive our roadways while driving and drinking. To do so puts them and us at risk.

Last year, alcohol was a factor in 76 highway deaths in Montana. Understanding the risks of driving under the influence is a personal responsibility. Drivers have a responsibility to protect themselves, their passengers and other motorists, yet the toll of

DUI in Montana continues to be worse than anywhere else in the nation.

Laws make a difference. The 2005 Legislature must put the breaks on drunken driving, which is encouraged by allowing drinking while driving.

Public opinion favors the enforcement of an open container ban. In a poll conducted by the Billing Gazette in December, when asked: "Do you support or oppose banning open containers of alcoholic beverages in vehicles" 69% of the respondents said they support a ban. It is time for our Montana Legislature to enact legislation that reflects the will of the people by supporting Senator Gary Perry's Bill that will prohibit open containers of alcoholic beverages in ones car. This is a common sense proposal that will improve public safety and one that has the full support of the Schweitzer/Bohlinger administration. Thank you for your consideration.