AARP Montana

Exhibit No. 6
Date 3-11-05
Bill No. HB 196

March 11, 2005

TO: Chairman Senator Wheat and Members of Senate Judiciary Committee

FROM: Alex Ward, Associate State Director, AARP Montana

RE: Support of HB 196

Chairman Wheat and members of the committee, my name is Alex Ward and I am Associate State Director of AARP Montana. AARP is a non profit, non partisan member organization with 143,000 members in Montana. In addition to working with AARP, I was a police officer in Bellevue, Washington for 25 years and have seen many cases of fraud, abuse and exploitation of elders during that time.

AARP supports HB 196 because it is a small, but important, step to help combat the ever increasing financial exploitation risk. The bill includes language that reminds the agent that he/she is working for the best interest of the elderly person and not for themselves.

Montana has a growing aging population and many of the elderly live in rural areas and are on fixed incomes. These Montanans do not have easy access to legal services or attorneys and utilize power of attorney forms from our organization and state government.

AARP agrees with Adult Protective Services that a significant number of financial exploitation of elderly cases involve people abusing the power of attorney. Many agents use the form to access and spend the elderly person's assets on themselves and deplete their entire savings and other resources. By passing this bill, if an elderly person tried to recover any stolen monies taken by an agent, the language would clearly outline the obligation to the agent that taking that money was wrong and should be restored.

We compliment Adult Protective Services for taking numerous actions to try to reduce the financial exploitation opportunities and help protect Montana's vulnerable population.

We urge you to support HB 196.

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