

1602 East Seltice Way
Post Falls, ID 83854

Senate Local Govt. Comm.

Exhibit No. 2

Date March 31, 2005

Bill No. HB 342

Senate Local Government Committee
Montana State Legislature
Helena, MT 59620

March 31, 2005

Dear Committee Members:

I am a wastewater systems engineer and real estate developer. Formerly I resided in Florence, Montana. I currently conduct business out of Florence and in Idaho. I strongly support HB 342, which I would describe as the Montana sewer SID reform bill.

For more than a decade I endeavored to convince Montana State officials to begin meaningful consideration of advanced wastewater treatment systems. However, state officials here stonewalled my efforts while concentrating on outdated, polluting, buried gravity main systems. During my interactions with state and local Montana officials and their agents, it became very clear to me that a relatively small group of entrenched engineers had gained control over multi-million dollar projects, statewide. I am sure that as time goes on you will come to have deeper appreciation of the matters involved in this growing concern. It also became evident that there was, as your Legislative Auditor Scott Seacat put it, "the appearance of conflict of interest" in the awarding and administration of large state and federal wastewater grants.

Consequently, I moved my focus out of state to a political climate where I have doubled my net worth over the course of just two years. At this time I am in the process of developing more advanced projects involving alternative technologies, including advanced on-site wastewater treatment and recycling, organic greenhouses, buildings that feature "clean" construction materials and methods, passive geothermal and solar heating, and other systems that have enjoyed use where state and local governments have chosen to promote reform, progress, and economic growth. By simply responding to the needs of an informed clientele, in my current project I will increase my net worth 5 fold. While I am employing widely accepted advanced technologies and construction systems, Montana appears to have locked itself in the past and out of the future. This is a most unfortunate situation for Montana's workforce, and especially unfortunate and limiting for the young people of Montana.

I rely upon the public will in my business. In my experience, it is the dynamic of "public participation" that drives my business. I have learned that the public most often knows not only what it wants but also what is best for society as a whole. As we can see, it is with good reason that the right of public participation is strongly held in the Montana Constitution. That is why I strongly support HB 342, which restores the right of fair and meaningful public participation.

Sincerely,


Duane Knapp

cc Governor Brian Schweitzer