



League of Women Voters of Montana

HB 790

SENATE NATURAL RESOURCES
EXHIBIT NO. 1
DATE 4/1/05
BILL NO. HB 790

Mr. Chair, Members of the Committee:

My name is Kathleen Williams, and I represent the Montana League of Women Voters. The League is a non-partisan organization. Membership is open to men and women. We rise in support of HB790 to support an EQC study of split estate issues associated with coal bed methane development in Montana.

The League carefully studies local, state and national policy and only allows advocacy on positions that have garnered consensus support in those studies. Both Montana and national League positions support the concepts and process in this bill. We support protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest and environmentally sound energy policies. The League promotes natural resource policies that manage land as a finite resource and that incorporate principles of stewardship. We believe property rights need to be protected, commensurate with overall consideration of public health and environmental protection. The League also seeks to promote public understanding and participation in decision making as essential elements of responsible and responsive management of our natural resources.

**This bill is a good blend of recognizing the need for thoughtful study of issues associated with CBM development, and the need to broadly conduct that discussion.** The EQC has a good history of addressing complex issues that need more than one Session to investigate, as well as a good history of involving stakeholders and the public in its deliberations. **The amendments applied in the House further improve this bill.**

**We feel it is important that this study is in the form of a bill, rather than a resolution.** That form gives it the priority it deserves, the money it needs to conduct the scope of work envisioned (and to travel to affected areas to do it), and it mandates broad public involvement in the study.

We urge a **Do Concur** on this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Kathleen Williams

Chair, Natural Resources Subcommittee

Montana League of Women Voters

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