SENATE STATE ADMIN.
EXHIBIT NO. 2
DATE 1.26.05
BILL NO. 230

SB230 – Fusion – Closing (Sen. Joe Balyeat)

Let me quickly touch on a couple things I missed in my opening:

Members of the Committee, regardless of which side of the aisle you're on, I think there's one thing we can all agree on – voter apathy and voter cynicism about the election process are at an all-time high. Especially in MT. One way we can revitalize MT politics is to pass this bill. Moreover, the fiscal note will show that we can do this good work for free – a $0 impact on the general fund.

I also believe we have a constitutional obligation to pass this bill. We've sworn to uphold the state and federal constitutions. Montanans have the constitutional right to free speech and free association. Current law banning cross-party endorsement is a clear violation of those freedoms.

I believe that passage of this bill will lead to majority representation for all legislative districts; which is a good thing for each of those districts, and is also a good thing for their legislators.

I believe passage of this bill will lead to greater participation in the political process; and that's something we all want to see. And that's why my old liberal friend, Bob Nichol, and I agree wholeheartedly on this issue.

I, along with Sen. Toole and Rep. Kaufmann, ask the committee to take careful consideration of this bill; and please pass it to the floor for a full and vibrant philosophical debate on its merits.

Thank you for a good hearing.