

Testimony  
Sheila M. Stearns  
March 14, 2005

SENATE STATE ADMIN.  
EXHIBIT NO. 1  
DATE 3-14-05  
BILL NO. SR 10

To: State Administration Committee

Re: Confirmation of Regent Mike Foster

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I rise in support of the confirmation of Mike Foster to the Board of Regents for two primary reasons:

1. Regent Foster has been serving on the Board for one year now, and has earned the respect and appreciation of his colleagues on the Board and of the University System representatives who work most closely with the Board of Regents. There seem to be no issues, political or otherwise, that would seem to warrant his removal from the Board.
2. I support this confirmation because I believe that the reasons given at least in the press, to provide the new Governor the opportunity to put his stamp on the Board of Regents, is the opportunity that will present itself to the Governor over the next few years, as it does for all Governors. My sense of the constitutional and statutory intent of the formation of the Board of Regents was that the seven-year terms were intended to make the Board somewhat immune from the swift vagaries of gubernatorial elections. My sense of Senatorial confirmation is that it serves the very important role to halt any abuse by a Governor if his or her appointments seemed clearly not to be in the best interest of the University System, because the reasons for the appointment did not have the best interests of students and education at heart. Just because an appointee is an active member of a political party, current or past, does not seem to me the intent of disqualifying someone in the confirmation process.

We have an excellent Board of Regents. The members represent a variety of perspectives, skills, and insights. The new appointment of Stephen Barrett of Bozeman by Governor Schweitzer seems to be an excellent appointment.

I urge you to respect the process as it has unfolded over the past 35 years, and confirm Regent Mike Foster to continue the work that he has begun.

