

**MONTANA
ASSOCIATION OF
COUNTIES**

EXHIBIT 11
DATE 2/2/07
HB 416

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DATE: February 5, 2007
TO: Members of the House Appropriations Committee
FROM: Harold Blattie, Executive Director
Montana Association of Counties
RE: House Bill 416 (MacLaren) - Local Government Planning Assistance

On Friday, Feb 2, you heard House Bill 416, sponsored by Representative Gary MacLaren. Due to numerous bills of significance to Montana's Counties being heard at the same time, we were unable to attend the hearing to voice the Association's support for this bill.

"Planning" has become a misnomer in most of Montana because county planning offices are overwhelmed with subdivision applications and other activities such as developing Growth Policies and updating Subdivision Regulations. The result is that in actuality very little "planning" takes place. In much of Montana "planning" has become reactionary, rather than being able to take a proactive approach to development and growth.

In an attempt to determine the state of land use planning in Montana's Counties, the Montana Association of Counties (MACo) is conducting a survey of counties. We expect the survey to be completed shortly but with responses from 44 of 56 counties, there are just over half that have adopted a Growth Policy and several that have never adopted subdivision regulations.

The single most driving force behind counties not being able to address growth is the lack of funding. Planning simply gets pushed aside when competing for scarce dollars with law enforcement and other mandated essential services.

The Montana Association of Counties strongly urges your favorable consideration of HB 416 as an investment in the future of Montana.

MACo