

Subject: HB 553
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To: <SMENDENHALL@INEVA.COM>
Cc: "Andrea Olsen_MTLA" <monttla@mt.net>

EXHIBIT 4
DATE 2-8-07
HB 553

Dear Chairman Mendenhall,

I write this e-mail to express my support of HB 553 (allowing the injured worker to choose her vocational rehabilitation counselor – "CRC"). Workers' compensation benefits have been drastically reduced during the past twenty years. However, the Legislature was wise to retain vigorous vocational retraining benefits. These benefits allow injured workers to learn new trades, which mean that they return to work at higher wages. Therefore, they learn jobs that allow them to minimize the wage-loss effect of the injury, they become tax-paying contributors to society, and they have better self-esteem (which speeds their physical recovery).

Unfortunately, retraining benefits cost money, and when money is involved, the insurance companies want to exert their all too powerful influence. If the insurers pick the CRC, the CRC feels conflicted when the CRC decides the case against the insurer (and for retraining). If the CRC makes the decision for retraining too often, then the insurer hires a different CRC.

Montana's vocational retraining laws should be free from insurer interference. The CRC Code of Ethics states that the injured worker is the CRC's "client," so HB 553 does nothing more than help the CRC to hold true to the CRC's applicable ethical duty. Finally, HB 553 keeps the insurers' interests out of the question about whether an injured worker needs to retrain, because that should be decision based on interest and ability – not profit. Please support HB 553. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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