

Montana State Legislature

Exhibit Number: 15

This exhibit is in regards to SB 291 , It contains several different types of materials to numerous to scan. Therefore only 10 pages have been scanned to aid in your research. You may view the original it is on file at the Montana Historical Society and may be observed there.

Letters of Support for SB 291



YELLOWSTONE CLUB

Montana State Legislature
Helena, MT

Re: Creation of a High School in Big Sky, Montana

Dear State Legislators:

I am writing on behalf of the Yellowstone Club, its Members and its employees to share our support for the effort to allow the community of Big Sky the independence to be able to create its own High School.

We have been active within the Big Sky Community, since the inception of Yellowstone Club in 2000, with our support for the need to have a High School here. We have regularly raised money for the local K-8 community school, Ophir, as we appreciate how important this institution is to the long term viability and success of the Big Sky area.

Yellowstone Club has become one of the major employers in the area, and we have plans to continue to grow in that regard, and one of the regular impediments we have to finding and retaining executives and employees is the lack of a High School in the community. These important individuals to our organization have a real dilemma when they have children of High School age and often are forced to leave our employ and seek jobs in other areas that are closer to High Schools; or, these people have to either move to Bozeman, and or the children suffer a long day on the bus and often miss out on before and after school activities.

The Yellowstone Club, though its charitable organization, Dreamcatcher Endowment Inc., will pledge to support a new High School here in Big Sky with their on-going fund raising efforts.

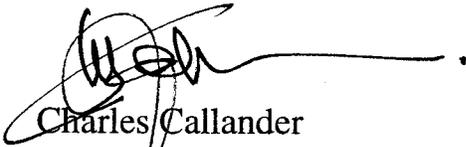
Yellowstone Club represents over 300 families, the majority of whom are second Homeowners, but a number of these families are giving serious consideration to making the move to Montana and to Big Sky on a

permanent basis because they love the area, Montana and the quality of life here. This Bill, which will provide for the potential of a High School for Big Sky, is a 'tipping point' for many of these families in their decision making.

We ask that you enthusiastically support this bill in this legislature.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Callander", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

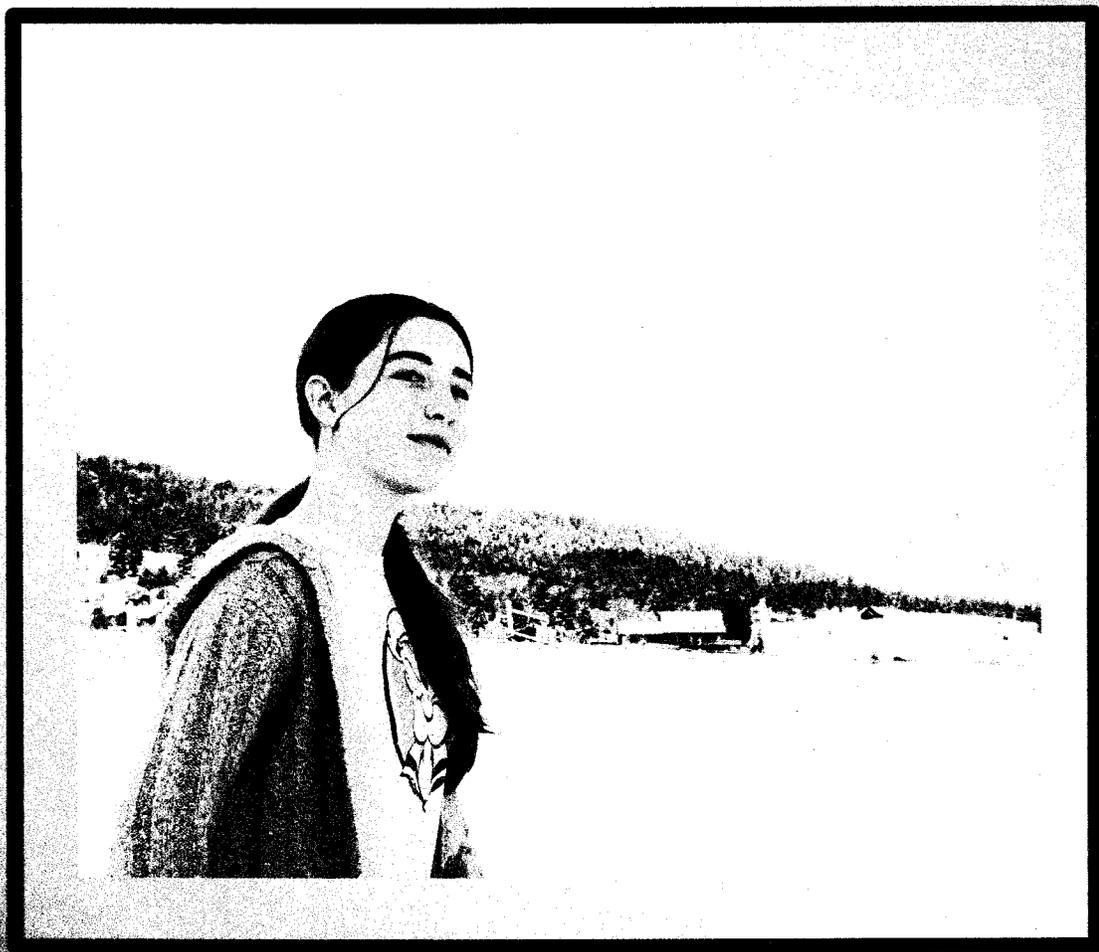
Charles Callander
President

Yellowstone Club Property Owners Association and

President

Dreamcatcher Endowment Inc.

- Business - Looking to the Future





Ophir School District #72
45465 Gallatin Road, Gallatin Gateway, Mt. 89730
406-995-4281 (fax) 406-995-2161

January 17, 2007

The Honorable Don Ryan
Chairman
Education and Cultural Resources Committee
P.O. Box 200700
Helena, MT 59620-0500

Senator Ryan:

I am chair of the Ophir School Board, District #72, in Big Sky. I wanted you to know that at our regular board meeting today we passed a resolution supporting legislative action to give District #72 residents the right to vote on expanding our current K-8 district to include a high school.

We realize that this would require creating an exception to the moratorium on establishing new high school districts. It is not a given that District #72 voters would support a high school. But we believe they should have the opportunity to consider it.

In a recent survey of Big Sky parents conducted by Bozeman High School nearly 80% of respondents favored local control for a local high school. A group of parents and concerned citizens in Big Sky has been working to raise awareness of issues involved with the current eighty mile round trip commutes for students and to gather information about the potential requirements and costs of a future high school to be located here.

Should this group find general community support – and I believe they will – it would be a shame if a legislative barrier prevents local citizens from even considering such a step.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue.

Jon C. Holtzman
Chair
Ophir Board of Trustees
District # 72

Loren Bough

From: Michael Redburn [mredburn@bozeman.k12.mt.us]

Sent: Wednesday, March 14, 2007 7:44 AM

To: Loren Bough

Subject: Support for SB 291

Dear Loren,

Thank you for your continued efforts on behalf of the high school students and families who reside in the Big Sky area. I am providing you with a copy of a message I will send to each member of the House Education Committee regarding my strong support for SB 291. You or your representative should feel free to submit a hard copy of this email into the record during the hearing on this bill on Friday, March 16, 2007. I regret that I will be unable to attend and testify in person to my support for this legislation.

Sincerely,
Michael Redburn, Superintendent
Bozeman Public Schools

Dear House Education Committee Members,

I strongly urge you to support SB 291. Over the past two years the Bozeman Public Schools and the Friends of Big Sky Education (FBSE) have worked diligently and effectively to develop the provisions contained in this legislation. As a result, the Bozeman Board of Trustees and the FBSE are in mutual support of SB 291.

This legislation will allow the Big Sky community to expand the Ophir School District from its current K-8 program to a K-12 program. The Bozeman Trustees are on record as supporting the creation of a high school program at Big Sky. The provisions of this legislation provides for that with the necessary safeguards for the remaining Bozeman High School District taxpayers. The process whereby Ophir could expand to a K-12 district is deliberative and consistent with other legal procedures regulating school district boundary changes.

Our support is contingent upon the provisions as approved by the Senate.

3/16/2007

This legislation is a true example of collaboration between various parties and it is deserving of your support.

Respectfully,
Michael Redburn, Superintendent
Bozeman Public Schools



BIG SKY RESORT

P.O. Box 160001
Big Sky, Montana
59715

(406) 995-5000
Fax (406) 995-5001

National Reservations
(800) 548-4486

Group/Convention Sales
(800) 548-4487
Fax (406) 995-5005

BOYNE USA RESORTS

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Boyne Mountain, MI
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Crystal Mountain, WA
Gallatinburg, TN
Cypress Mountain, British Columbia

January 27, 2007

RE: Supporting SB152 & SB 291 To Build a High School in Big Sky

Dear Montana Legislators,

As a father of two, a 26-year Big Sky resident, and the General Manager of Big Sky Resort, I know how badly our community needs a high school. I don't want my family commuting the most dangerous road in Montana several times every day to go to and from school, sporting events and extra curricular activities. As a long-term resident, I have seen our community population double, and double, and double again, and at every stage have marveled at how our residents come together to solve community problems like this. As a manager of one of Montana's largest employers, I know how **good school systems are key to attracting good workers.**

You must recognize that a town without a high school is just not a town. The social fabric of **every community is woven around the kids, families, learning, sports and location of its schools.** Right now, our community is fractured by hundreds of daily commutes these kids and their families are forced to make on dangerous winter roads. Think about how wasteful this is in every way. Think how much richer these lives would be if they were spend learning, playing, or loving rather than sitting on the seat of a school bus.

For an entirely monetary reason that ignores the needs of Big Sky kids, the Bozeman School District is fighting Big Sky's effort to create our high school because they don't want our tax dollars to leave their district. This stance is self serving and unfair for Big Sky kids. Especially considering that, after two years of requests, the Bozeman District failed to help find a way to build and operate a high school in Big Sky. Also consider economic research indicating that, at Bozeman's booming growth rate, the growing tax base will replace any lost tax base in only two years. Since the Bozeman District is unwilling to build a needed high school in Big Sky, **our community needs authority to do it ourselves with our own tax dollars.**

Big Sky is Montana's fastest growing community and we have grown into needing a high school for our kids. Please **support SB152 and SB291** authorizing local voters the local control necessary to do it.

Sincerely,

Big Sky Resort


Taylor Middleton
General Manager



BOYNE U.S.A., INC.

January 28, 2007

BOYNE
MONTANA

BOYNE MICHIGAN

BOYNE MICHIGAN

BOYNE
UTAH

To the Montana State Legislature:

I am writing to you in my roles as a vested member in the success of the community of Big Sky, a father of three, and an owner of Big Sky Resort. My family and I have been committed to Big Sky for over 30 years. I have seen this community rally together to confront the challenges it has faced as an unincorporated town, inventing itself from the ground up. It has created trails and preschools, parks and neighborhoods. The school has and continues to be the center of our community. But Big Sky faces a challenge as a community that cannot be solved by sheer willpower and work alone. Big Sky needs a new school--a high school--and it can't get one because of a failing in a state law that stops growth, and local control, in its tracks.

As an employer, we have to tell potential employees that if they take the job we are offering, their child will have to live an hour from the nearest high school, along a road no one in the area drives without cause. We have to tell them that no amount of growth in our area will solve this problem. You won't be surprised to hear that many do not want to make this deal. Should employers have to offer potential employees this choice? Should families who have grown up here face it?

I say no, and I'm sure you do to, on these grounds at least. None of us want to put kids on a dangerous road more than necessary. None of you want to split families, burden employers, and stunt communities. These are not even factors to argue about. And of course, we aren't really arguing about the justification for a high school. No one can. Big Sky has the numbers necessary to make the school work.

As the leader of the organization which, according to state documents, is one of the top employers in the entire state, I ask you to vote yes on SB152 and SB291 as they are written today.

Sincerely,

Stephen Kircher

Boyne USA Resorts



SIMKINS
HOLDINGS, LLC

March 19, 2007

Honorable Members of the Education Committee
Montana State House of Representatives

RE: Senate Bill 291 Big Sky School District

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing this letter to express my strong support for Senate Bill 291, which would allow the residents of the Big Sky community to decide whether to establish their own separate high school district. This legislation is necessary to accomplish this purpose because of the current statewide moratorium on the establishment of new high school districts. My comments are based on my observations as a resident of Bozeman and a business owner who is very active in both the Bozeman and Big Sky communities. The reasons I believe that this bill should be passed are as follows.

1. The Big Sky community has grown tremendously over the last several years and truly constitutes its own separate community that is very different from Bozeman. In fact, a study that we commissioned to assess the feasibility of a grocery store in Big Sky indicated that the number of full-time residents had increased from about 1,400 as shown in the 2000 census to an estimated 3,100 in 2006. That is, the community has been growing at an estimated annual rate of about 17.5%! I also believe that all indications are that the community will continue to grow at a very high rate for the foreseeable future. Thus, even at the current number of full-time residents, Big Sky qualifies as a medium size community by Montana standards and I think should be allowed by state law to have the option to form its own separate high school district.
2. Big Sky is located about 40 to 50 miles from Bozeman and this situation forces the high school students to travel long distances over Highway 191. This section of the highway is very dangerous which has caused a number of fatal accidents and serious injuries. This commute is a bad situation that is likely to lead to tragedy as the Big Sky students and parents continue to travel this road. Some Big Sky residents have even gone so far as to buy or rent a second residence in Bozeman for weekdays in order to avoid this dangerous and time-consuming commute. Thus, forcing Big Sky students to travel to Bozeman for high school education purpose places a huge burden on the students and families from financial and time standpoints. In my opinion this is simply unfair.



SIMKINS
HOLDINGS, LLC

3. The creation of a local high school in Big Sky also will lead to increased economic development in that area. Currently, one of the largest drawbacks for many families to live in Big Sky is the burden placed on these families by the absence of a high school there. As the recently released comprehensive economic study conducted by the state Department of Commerce indicated, Big Sky provides over 11,000 jobs and 860 million dollars of economic output for the state every year. Building a high school likely would help accelerate this boom for the Montana economy.

4. There has been some discussion of the property tax effect on Bozeman taxpayers should the Big Sky community create its own separate high school district. However, this issue seems to have been resolved when the Big Sky community and the Bozeman School District were able to come to an agreement on how to mitigate the financial effect that this bill would have on the Bozeman School District.

Thank you members of the House Education Committee for the opportunity to submit these comments on Senate Bill 291.

Sincerely,

William G. Simkins
Manager