EXHIBIT 3
DATE 3/19/07
SB 300

MMCA
MONTANA MOTOR CARRIERS ASSOCIATION

Good stuff. TRUCKS BRING IT

ATA AMERICAN TRUCKING ASSOCIATIONS

501 NORTH SANDERS #201 HELENA MT 59601 406-442-6600 FAX 406-443-4281 www.mttrucking.org

Mr. Chairman, members of the House Judiciary Committee, for the record I am Spook Stang Executive Vice President of the Montana Motor Carriers Association. The MMCA would like to go on record in support of SB. 300

The number one priority of the MMCA this session is to promote and work for passage of a primary seat belt law in Montana. The membership of the MMCA is committed to increasing seat belt usage in Montana which will directly reduce the number of fatalities and incapacitating injuries on our roadways.

In 2005, more than 7 out of 10 vehicle occupants who died in Montana were not wearing seat belts. Failure to wear a seat belt contributes to more fatalities than any other single traffic related behavior. In Montana injuries are the leading cause of death for people age 1-34 and motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of injury related accidents. Forty two percent of all fatal and non fatal injuries are related to motor vehicle crashes. Simply wearing a seat belt reduces the risk of being killed or injured in a traffic crash by 40-60% according to the national highway Traffic Safety Administration.

In Montana 75% of occupants who were killed where not restrained, while 71% of those involved in injury crashes were restrained. The study of 2561 people injured in Motor Vehicle collisions between 2003 and 2005 showed that of the 149 that ended up in acute care 58% were unrestrained, 591 that ended up in ICU 65% were unrestrained, 723 that ended up with regular care were spit 50-50, 389 that ended up in OR 59% were unrestrained; 22 in morgue73% were unrestrained; and those who ended up at home or elsewhere 64% were restrained.

The average stay for those unrestrained passengers in ICU was twice as long as those who were belted in as was the average hospital stay. 5% of those who expired in the hospital were unrestrained compared to the 2% who were restrained.

While the MMCA's prime objective to the passage of a primary seat belt law is safety, it should be noted that the economic costs to Montanans is becoming a burden. Studies have shown that the average workdays lost by an unbelted passenger are 90 days, while the average time lost by a belted passenger is around 14 days. Traffic crashes are also the number one cause of worker deaths and a significant cause of work related disabilities. Traffic crashes cost employers in both time and money. On and off the job crashes result in millions of lost work days. This is a huge economic impact that directly affects Montana employers in the trucking industry.

Every Montanan pays about $640 a year towards the cost of vehicle crashes. That is $2560 for a family of four. This includes such items as insurance costs and uncompensated care to motor vehicle crash victims According to Billings hospitals alone, during 2005, the average hospital charge for those wearing a belt was $20,709, while those not belted were charged an average of $38,692. Within the same period, these hospitals also provided $2.2 million in uncompensated care to motor vehicle crash victims.

Last but not least you may ask why does the trucking industry care. No matter how much safety we practice we can only affect 30% of the truck car collisions as the passenger car cause 70% of these accidents. We understand that accidents will occur and we want to make sure that injuries and fatalities are kept as low as possible, this is a huge economic impact that directly affects Montana employers in the trucking industry so that we can continue to provide health insurance and other benefits to our employees.

This past year I had the privilege of serving on a panel that helped develop a Comprehensive Safety Plan for the Montana Department of Transportation. This diverse group came from all corners of Montana. It included highway patrol, local sheriffs and tribal police officers, health care professionals from large communities, small communities and tribal health officials. We paid particular attention to Tribal officials when the explained that almost 70% of their tribal health funds went to help victims of traffic accidents. Many commented that if we could get a primary seat belt measure passed that they would be able to use those funds to better help with other tribal health care issues. At least on Montana tribe has went as far as enacting their own primary seat belt law on their reservation. They all agreed that a primary seat belt law in Montana would go a long way in reducing the severity of injuries and the number of fatalities on Montana's roads.

Upgrading Montana's law to make seat belt violations a primary expense is the most effective and efficient way to get vehicle occupants to buckle up.

In closing Mr. Chairman and members of the committee I would like to remind you that it isn't the insurance companies that pay for these injuries and associated costs. It is the citizens of Montana who are paying for these through higher health costs, health insurance and increased work comp premiums. We need you to help us get relief from these added costs to society. Motor Vehicle crashes cause to many unnecessary deaths and serious injuries in Montana. Lack of restraint use increases the risk of death, serious injury, medical expenses, and personal/family emotional costs.

Seat Belts save lives.

Please support SB 300