

MONTANA STATE SENATE  
2007 LEGISLATURE

WITNESS STATEMENT

NAME Walt Hill

ADDRESS P.O. Box 565

HOME PHONE 677-6563 WORK PHONE 243-5140

REPRESENTING Self

APPEARING ON WHICH PROPOSAL HT 39

DO YOU: SUPPORT  OPPOSE  AMEND

COMMENTS:

attached.

PLEASE LEAVE PREPARED STATEMENT WITH COMMITTEE SECRETARY

**Madam Chairman and Members of the Committee**

**My name is Walt Hill and I am here on behalf of the thousands of Montanans who would like to see their university-educated children find a suitable, well-paying job in the State so they could remain here. I ran for the House, unsuccessfully, against Robin Hamilton, one of the co-sponsors of this bill. The desire to help the economy of Montana through funding support for research infrastructure was one of the key reasons that I ran. I appreciate his willingness and that of Ron Erickson and the other co-sponsors to help see this to fruition.**

**I have been a Professor of Biochemistry at The University of Montana for over 38 years. During that period of time I have actively pursued research, receiving almost \$12 million in grants. I have served as Director of the Montana Center of Excellence in Biotechnology for over 10 years, and was co-director of the National Science Foundation's Montana State EPSCoR program for over a decade. I have served as a program director for the National Science Foundation and been on numerous review panels for the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health. I only mention these to let you know that I have been able to observe the effects of scientific research at both the national and the State level over the last three decades.**

**I love Montana, and wouldn't be here if I didn't, as is the case with many of you. I have sons and daughters who would love to live here, but cannot, due to the lack of suitable positions that would utilize their training and expertise. As noted in the third "Whereas" in this resolution, research universities generate economic development. It is also noted in the fourth "Whereas" that the Montana University System is not really competitive due to our lack of research facilities and infrastructure. And this is the problem!**

**Quality faculty members can always obtain sufficient external funding to perform their research, which often can be developed into spin-off companies. Even more often, quality faculty members, grouped in highly active areas of research, can be the drawing power for larger companies, and attract them to the State. We have some evidence for this, both in the Gallatin Valley and in the Missoula-Bitterroot area.**

**However, by and large, we are unable to attract the very high-quality faculty needed to make this happen due to 1) lack of research space; 2) necessary core facilities; 3) support for technically trained personnel to operate highly technical equipment, and; 4) the inability to provide startup funds for new investigators. For instance, to attract a very promising junior-level faculty member to a university, it is necessary to offer him or her between \$500,000 - \$1 million in funds to start their research program. This is over and above a fully equipped laboratory and other core facilities needed for the research.**

**If we are going to attract and retain high-quality research faculty, who will develop and attract high-tech business to Montana, we must provide the research infrastructure (not research grants) necessary to attract them to the State and allow them to be competitive in international research. This resolution will provide for the study to be made to estimate the amount of funding the State must invest to prime this research engine!**

**I should note in closing that the Universities are one of the great investments of State funds. For every dollar invested, over \$3.40 comes back into the economy of the State. Further investment will generate even greater returns!**