

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL NO. 146

**Submitted by Lois Menzies, Court Administrator
Montana Supreme Court
January 12, 2007**

The Juvenile Delinquency Intervention Program (JDIP) is an essential component of juvenile probation within Montana's Youth Courts. The program defines how the juvenile placement funds are allocated and determines how the money is to be spent on placements, programs, and services for youth referred to the Youth Court.

This bill represents many hours of discussion and debate between the Department of Corrections and the Office of Court Administration. We support this legislation for the following reasons:

1. The bill gives the Office of Court Administrator authority to administer the funds that are transferred to the Office. Under current law, funds are transferred to the Office but the approval for how those funds are spent rests with the Department of Corrections. We believe that it is essential for the Office of Court Administrator to have the statutory authority to administer the funds that are allocated to the Office and be held accountable for the expenditure of those funds.
2. The bill clarifies the statutes governing the program. Currently, there are large statutory gaps in how the program is structured and how it is intended to operated, which at times generates questions and confusion. This bill plugs those holes and provides sufficient guidance to both the Department and the Judicial Branch on the intended operation of the program.
3. This bill updates the program to reflect state assumption of District Court costs. Before state assumption, counties were the recipients of JDIP funds. When District Court costs became a state obligation in 2002, the Judicial Branch received the funding. However, the law was not amended to reflect this change as was noted in a recent legislative audit. This bill updates the law by removing counties from the JDIP statutes.

This bill represents a reasonable compromise in the administration of JDIP. We urge your support of this legislation.