SENATE AGRICULTURE
EXHIBIT NO. 1
DATE 3-3-09
BILL NO. HB 100

SENATE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

House Bill 100

Testimony of Ron de Yong
Director, Montana Department of Agriculture

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

For the record, my name is Ron de Yong, director of the Montana Department of Agriculture. I am here to testify in favor of House Bill 100.

As Rep. Steenson said, HB 100 allows for the appointment of between four and six members to the Montana Mint Committee. As a former mint producer in the Flathead Valley, I am familiar with the committee's work and with the mint industry in Montana and the Pacific Northwest, and around the world. I mention "around the world" because increased mint production from China and India, selling far below the cost of production for higher quality mint produced in the U.S., was a major factor decreasing the number of mint producers. Mint prices have recently increased with higher prices for wheat and barley. Higher prices will encourage past mint farmers to re-enter the business, especially if they own a mint processing facility.

The amount of money collected on assessments from the first sale of mint oil in Montana is small, totaling less than $5,000 in fiscal year 2008. Money collected through assessments is allocated by the committee for research and marketing efforts, primarily through the work of the Montana Experiment Station and the regional Mint Industry Research Council.

I urge you to support passage of this legislation.