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BUSINESS & LABOR
EXHIBIT NO. 9
DATE 1/19/09
BILL NO. SB135

January 16th, 2009

TO: Members of the Senate Business and Labor Committee

FROM: Bill Roberts, volunteer advocate for AARP Montana

RE: Support of SB 135 – Revise Insure Montana

Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Bill Roberts and I'm a volunteer advocate for AARP Montana – a non-profit, non-partisan organization with 165,000 members. I am here today in support of the Insure Montana program and all of the small businesses whose health insurance it helps to support.

This bill today is essentially about supporting the small business community of Montana. By taxing tobacco, the state of Montana was able to create a program that supports Montana's most vulnerable businesses by providing payment assistance on health insurance plans. AARP Montana believes that every person deserves access to quality and affordable healthcare, and the Insure Montana program is certainly a useful vehicle towards this goal.

In times of economic uncertainty, Montana's small businesses are more susceptible to market factors outside of their control. Insure Montana can directly help the profit margins of small businesses by assisting on some premiums, while at the same time allowing the businesses to attract the best employees possible by providing benefits. We also strongly support the revisions in this bill that allow for the program to be administered more effectively.

Health insurance assistance to small businesses helps to keep Montanans physically healthier during times of economic hardships; it helps keep their bottom line from collapsing. Therefore, AARP Montana strongly urges you to support the Insure Montana program and pass Senate Bill 135.

Jennie Chin Hansen, President
William D. Novelli, Chief Executive Officer