BUSINESS & LABOR
EXHIBIT NO. 1
DATE 3-19-09
BILL NO. HB621

February 20, 2009

Written documentation in support of the testimony on behalf of HB 621 presented by Cascade County Commissioner Joe Briggs and John Hayes of the Cascade County Tavern Association to the House Business and Labor Committee.

"AN ACT PROVIDING THAT AN EXISTING RETAIL BEER OR BEER AND WINE LICENSE FOR A FAIRGROUNDS COMPLEX MAY BE TRANSFERRED TO A POLITICAL SUBDIVISION OF THE STATE UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES; GRANTING RULEMAKING AUTHORITY TO THE DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE."

A brief History of the Montana Expo Park beer and wine license:

February 1983: Cascade County acquires a beer and wine license for use at the Montana State Fairgrounds (Montana Expo Park)

June 1988: The City of Great Falls takes over management of Expo Park under contract with Cascade County. The county transfers the license to the City of Great Falls for use at Expo Park.

December 2002: The contract between the City of Great Falls and Cascade County for management of Expo Park expires and the city attempts to transfer the license back to Cascade County. The Department of Revenue blocks the transfer of the license as they believe that a government entity is not allowed to own a liquor license. Since January of 2003, Cascade County has continued to operate beer and wine sales under a temporary authority.

HB 621 will allow the Department of Revenue to transfer the beer and wine license originally owned by Cascade County back to the county for use at the Montana Expo Park.

We would note that in addition to allowing the transfer of the license back to Cascade County, this bill would place additional limitations on the license not found on a standard license. In particular, the license would be limited to use on a fairgrounds, could only be held by a political subdivision of the State of Montana and would not have gaming rights. While these changes represent significant limitations to the license and remove any commercial value from the license, we view these as acceptable conditions and consistent with our planned use of the license. We respectfully request your support of HB 621

Joe Briggs
Peggy Beltrone
Bill Salina
Cascade County Commissioners

John Hayes
Cascade County Tavern Association

Steve Malicott
Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce