

**I am Elaine Herman (Helena MT) representing Eagle Forum on Senate Bill 81. Eagle Forum has a membership of 25000.**

**Eagle Forum supports Senate Bill 81 because:**

- **Election and representation for taxation is the basis of our government and should not exclude education. Because the Board of Education is currently appointed not elected the members do not answer to the taxpayers or parents.**
- **The State Board of Education was formed under the new constitution in 1972. Before 1972 all Public Education K-12 powers were in the hands of elected officials (the Local School Boards and the Legislature). You personally know how important it is that you represent and answer to the voters that brought you to be seated on this committee. It should be no exception for those in power of education. The Constitution gives the State Board of Education supreme power to control the public education system in Montana. It is imperative that this Board answer to the public just as you do.**
- **There is agreement across the board that local and parental involvement are the number one influences that improve the education progress of students. When the decisions for education are taken out of the hands of locally elected officials who answer to the parents, the parental involvement decreases and the academic progress of the students also decreases. Senate Bill 81 would give the parents an opportunity to vote on the issue of how the State Board of Education is chosen.**

- **Over 50% of the State budget goes into education. The power of how 50% of the tax payer's money is used should be in the hands of ELECTED officials who answer to the taxpayers just as you do. Senate Bill 81 will give the voters the opportunity to determine if they want the powers over education matters to answer to them or to exclude over 50% of their tax dollars from being accountable to the people. Most citizens are unaware that there is a State Board of Education and that this Board has the complete power over education decisions and that the members are not elected. You 9 Senators will have to answer to your constituents as to your reason for not giving the people the same opportunity you have to vote on Senate Bill 81 should you choose not to support it. Supporting Senate Bill 81 has no negative repercussions for any legislator democrat or republican as it is giving the people the choice to choose for themselves the matter of appointment or election.**
- **The educational financial crisis did not exist before the State Board of Education was formed. The education financial tug-a-war started surfacing after the power left the hands of elected Local School Boards. Currently the school system has become divorced from the community by filing a law suit against the people of Montana. Only a joint collaboration between the parents and community and the teachers and the school system will succeed in excellence. It is proof that the powers that got Montana into the discord of suing are not working for the excellence of Montana's Public School system. Perhaps it is good that we are at a crisis because it has pin pointed the problem of not**

**having Local Control for education. Senate Bill 81 is the solution to the law suits initiated by the school districts.**

**Eagle Forum would like to see some amendments to Senate Bill 81 as follows:**

- 1. Insert a conflict of interest clause requirement for candidates running for the State Board of Education. This is currently done for Local School Board candidates.**
- 2. Reduce the number of seats on the State Board of Education to 5 and use the election guidelines used for the PSC candidates. (This would reduce red tape and expense in the change over procedure)**
- 3. Limit the power of the State Board of Education to; coordination and strong suggestion for the Local School Boards. If the State Board of Education feels the Local School Boards are not taking necessary suggestions they give the State School Board always can come to the legislature with bills for the legislature to pass. The ability to do so will give their suggestive power backing. This limitation of power is Local Control in a nutshell. Local Control is a bi-partisan choice of Montanan's in every poll or survey taken on education. Nancy Keenan ran on her campaign on her belief of Local Control.**

**Please support Senate Bill 81.**