

Distinguished senators, I'm Greg Seltzer, a dentist in Hamilton. Nearly two years ago, I was elected to the Board of Trustees of the Bitterroot Valley Community College when the Ravalli County electorate voted for the establishment of the BVCC.

I would like to keep my two points as brief as possible, since after the five hundredth word, I feel speakers can run the risk of turning into background noise.

My first point relates to the arguments that many of you have heard from our detractors, that our proximity of being under 100 miles to the University of Montana somehow makes the existence of the BVCC less necessary. I have three daughters who have attended the U of M, and all three had to move to Missoula. Simple math for a commute of more than an hour each way results in 10 hours a week. Per academic year, that is the equivalent of 10 forty hour work weeks to be spent on the road!! You can't attend the University of Montana, and change irrigation pipe on the family farm or ranch. You can't attend the University of Montana and care for younger siblings at your family home. You can't attend the University of Montana and keep your Bitterroot Valley job. You can't retrain yourself following a lay-off and stay in your home. Not having a local institution is keeping many of our young people from having any opportunity at all. So please, please be very clear on the point that our needs are the same as if we were 200 miles from a college or university.

My second point requires a brief history of how we got to this point, to this very day. The Montana statute allowing for the establishment of a Community College lays out several steps. Firstly, the community must meet several mathematic factors involving the taxable base and the numbers of high-school graduates. We surpass these numbers easily, and are one of the only Montana communities that can. Next, there needs to be a huge number of petition signatures to place the establishment of a Community College on the ballot. This was also exceeded. Next, the voters have to approve it in an election, and elect seven trustees. This was also successful in May of 2007. Next, it is drafted into a resolution through a series of PEPB subcommittee meetings that we attended here in Helena, requiring analysis by the legislative legal and fiscal staff. This was also successfully completed about

8 months ago. Then, the statute lays out a very peculiar step. It basically says "Now, let's ask the Board of Regents what they think of having an addition to the education system of the State that they won't have power and control over." It is contrary to human nature to have any individual or group of individuals yield this type of authority... It just doesn't happen in human history. It isn't fair to the Regents to even expect an organization such as the Board of Regents to yield such a concession. These are fine people, but their opposition was cast in stone the day the first petition-signer penned his or her name to the ballot petition. So please, as you consider your votes, realize that we, nor any other community college establishment effort in the future, in any community, will ever get the initial blessing of the Board of Regents. Ultimately, we will all work with the Regents in a coordinated, seamless, and functional way, and ultimately we will also enjoy the success of Montana's other three community colleges who are so very streamlined in meeting the needs of their communities.

For if the largest Montana community without access to two or four year higher education, jumps through all the hoops laid out by this statute and is shot down at this point, there will never, ever, be a successful usage of this statute, in Ravalli County or anywhere else in the Great State of Montana, and that, ladies and gentlemen, would be a shame.