SENATE NATURAL RESOURCES
EXHIBIT NO. 4
DATE March 4, 2009
BILL NO. HB 140

Testimony on Forest Health Legislation
From Robert Johnson
Montana AFL-CIO

The Montana AFL-CIO stands in support of all bills that promote healthy forests in Montana. We support the efforts of the interim fire committee and the legislative bills that came from this committee. The forest products industry in Montana is a vital component of the overall management of both state and federal lands. This industry brings more than $340,000,000 to Montana's economy every year. Without good forest management and this important infrastructure of timber manufacturing in place, there would be no feasible means to keep our Montana forested lands healthy and reduce the catastrophic fire dangers that currently exist. The jobs that the forest products industry currently has and could create from the passage of the Interim Fire Committees bills are crucial to maintaining and preserving our forests. The jobs are essential to the future on Montana. The reduction of large scale forest fires for Human, Animal, and our environment health is very apparent.

Montana has almost 20 million acres of forested land. The state has less than 400,000 of forested lands. The U.S. Forest service has 12.9 million acres of forested lands. The rest is either, private lands, Tribal lands, B.L.M., or another entity of government. There are over 2 million acres of Mountain Pine beetle kill in Montana and over the past 20 plus years logging and other forms of managing our forests has been almost non existent except for the State who manages it's lands very well. There are just 8 major timber manufacturers left in Montana. These bills could be the difference in keeping those facilities continuing and no timber industry left at all. Currently there is no forest products industry left in Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico. There is no fiscal way to efficiently deal with there forested lands today and the fires are going to be uncontrollable in the future.

Please consider and supporting these very important pieces of legislation.

Thank you,
Robert Johnson
Montana AFL-CIO