

EXHIBIT # 8  
DATE Jan 12 2011  
# 88

January 12, 2011

Before you today is a bill that will allow individuals who are not registered voters to conduct the balloting process in Montana. Simply put, no matter how you feel about it, children of 16 years of age are not allowed to vote in elections in Montana, yet the proposal before you would allow those individuals to judge the voting of other, registered, citizens. On the face of it this does not make sense. The argument that this will teach our young people about civics indicates that the school system that we devote so much of the budget to is failing in this manner. That argument indicates that the students don't understand this process unless they can have this "field trip." Rather should teachers encourage students to attend the elections and observe instead of implementing a law that could cause some very real legal problems. What problems? Let me put it to you this way. I have spent the last several elections as an election judge. But if this law would be passed I would never want to become a chief judge, because if there were ever a dispute between a potential voter and an underage judge, it would be the chief judge who would be liable for the actions of the minor. That is a very uncomfortable position to put judges in. And certainly it would not help for recruitment of additional judges.

There has been much talk, and action, regarding the rules for voting in elections in Montana and the United States. Quickly the matter of voting absentee has gone from a handful of participants to a very large number of those who cast ballots. In some locations the idea of not having physical polls and having mail in ballots only has become a reality. While much of these changes feature the allure that maybe with the changes many more people will vote another reason is that it saves the political district that holds the election money. Recently the Secretary of State in Montana has advocated a greater mail-in ballot measure, heading toward complete mail-in such as Oregon, and in her statement she has said that this will save the state of Montana millions of dollars.

If this is the wave of the future, and the Secretary of State seems to be saying it is, then why is there need for underage election judges when the numbers of voters actually going to the polls is drastically shrinking? It seems to me that time and events has passed this idea by and the miniscule return for having this bill weighed against the legal entanglements it would bring to us who serve makes a nay vote on this bill an easy choice.

H1300

Jon Rusk