

February 21, 2011

EXHIBIT #2  
DATE 2-21-11  
HB 530

Chairman Ingraham and Members of the House Local Government Committee:

The legislative chair (Janice Hoppes) for the Montana Association of County Clerks and Recorders and Election Administrators (MACCR) worked yesterday and last night with me to try to develop amendments to HB 530 (Washburn) – *allow for early ballot preparation*. As you know, this bill is on the table of this committee.

In a phone conversation with Chairman Ingraham, Ms. Hoppes sought to understand the committee's thinking as to why the bill failed in committee. Based on that discussion, she developed proposed amendments which 1) shorten the time frame from 3 to 1 day and 2) provide for rule-making for the Secretary of State to develop rules to address the security issues identified in the committee discussion. It is my hope that this committee will vote this morning to reconsider its action on HB 530, place these amendments on it and let it advance to the floor. Ms. Hoppes and Rep. Ingraham spoke last night in terms of a blast motion from the House floor but because that would have to be done this afternoon (without the ability to contact election administrators) I don't see how that can be successful. I believe an action in this morning's committee meeting is the only way to save the bill.

I realize that, for those of you in small counties, this is probably not a big issue. However, after the bill failed, the Yellowstone County election administrator advised me that in just one day in Yellowstone County they prepared almost 40,000 votes. The resolution adopting this legislative proposal passed unanimously at the MACCR convention because all of the counties, whether they be large or small, understand that if even one county's election is at risk, the faith of the voters in the integrity of the process for the state is at risk. Regardless of county size, this proposal has the full support of all county election administrators.

Members of the committee, I can tell you that election administrators across the state are looking ahead to the 2012 election with a great deal of trepidation and anxiety. This will be a very big election with many contested races and likely many ballot issues. It will most likely be an election with several pages of ballots. At the beginning of the session we were all quite confident that the mail ballot, with its broad bi-partisan support and months of work would be successful. It wasn't. HB 530 is one of the few remaining items that the MACCR looked at that would aid immeasurably in assuring that the 2012 elections will be run as smoothly, efficiently and securely as possible. Please reconsider your action on HB 530.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Kindest regards,

Linda Stoll (on behalf of Montana's 56 election administrators)