

## SB 101

To Re-Establish a State Board of Denturistry  
From the Denturist Association of Montana

Denturistry is a profession whose members fabricate and insert dentures. Denturists are trained at professional schools and serve extensive internships with licensed practitioners. The profession was recognized in Montana in 1984 by a vote of the public. Denturistry is practiced widely in Europe, in Canada, in Australia and in six states. Despite the increasing need for affordable denture services among low-income and senior citizens, the profession of dentistry continues to actively campaign against expansion of Denturistry.

The 1984 Montana initiative ("The Freedom of Choice in Denture Services Act") established a state Board of Denturistry and authorized licensed professional denturists to directly serve Montanans.

While Denturists provide services that traditionally overlapped with services provided by dentists, dental schools have moved away from teaching about dentures and now place greater emphasis on tooth implants. Implants are fine, but they are expensive. Many patients cannot afford implants, but find dentures to be a reasonably-priced solution to their needs. Additionally, Denturists often treat their patients in their homes or in nursing homes, a service that is far less likely to be provided by a dentist.

As our population ages, and as government health services cover fewer dental treatment options, Denturistry offers an important alternative to services from dentists. Dentistry is a fine profession, but it is also a business that tends to protect its own interests. More dentures mean fewer implants. For those dentists who still provide dentures, their services tend to be priced considerably higher than the competing services of Denturists.

What happened after Montana voters approved licensing of Denturistry in 1984? The separate board approved in the initiative was merged with the Board of Dentistry in 1987. Since then, a series of disputes have followed in which the Board of Dentistry has attempted to restrict the scope of practice of Denturistry. Litigation has been almost constant since that time.

## Passage of SB 101:

1. Restores the expressed will of Montana voters when they passed the 1984 Initiative;
2. Will result in the licensure of more Denturists in Montana;
3. Will increase the availability of affordable dentures at a time when demand is growing because of our aging population and reduced availability of services;
4. While only half of Montana dentists accept Medicaid, most Denturists do so;
5. Medicaid today only pays for tooth extractions (not root canals). Increasing numbers of Montanans need partial and complete dentures, and many Montanans cannot afford the very high cost of tooth implants.

Lopach