

February 15, 2013

Chairman Osmundson and Members
Joint Appropriations Sub-Committee on General Government

RE: Work and Partnership with Department of Labor and Industry in Yellowstone County

Thank you Chairman Osmundson and Members for offering me this opportunity to share with you my perspective on the work of the Department of Labor/Job Service Center in Yellowstone County. I'm Steve Arveschoug, Executive Director, Big Sky Economic Development—the public/private partnership that is charged with the responsibility to lead economic development efforts in our community.

Today I want to express our support for the work of our Department of Labor and Industry Workforce Services Division, and the partnerships we have developed with the Region 4 office in Billings.

The efforts of our local Job Service have a real impact on the business community that we represent in Yellowstone County. They host hiring events in partnership with area employers, over 85 different events this past year. They provide support resources for small businesses related to employment practices, and partner with other local agencies on the Billings Jobs Jamboree—hosting dozens of local employers and thousands of area job seekers. And, when businesses have to make tough decisions to close their doors, the Job Service provides “rapid response services” that are critical to the impacted workers—and we've had recent events where those services were needed.

Recently, the Job Service in Billings coordinated a hiring event for the Northern Hotel (a great redevelopment project in downtown Billings). They helped the company manage 600 respondents to 117 open positions. The needs of businesses like the Northern Hotel cannot be met without the partnership of the Job Service as well as other local providers.

Additionally, we work very closely with the Department of Labor on the administration of the Incumbent Worker Training Program, which started as a pilot project in the Yellowstone County region under the leadership of the Billings Chamber of Commerce and Big Sky Economic Development. This program provides resources to small businesses to support their workforce training needs. In our area 58 employers, representing 112 employees have used this training program in FY 2013. Small businesses in healthcare, construction, automotive, financial services, retail, and property management have been impacted by this program this year. The Incumbent Worker Training Program truly supports small businesses in Montana.

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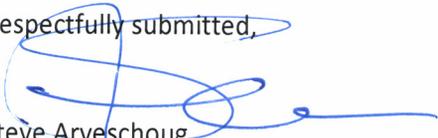
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Every-other-week I will contact the Region 4 Office with one question, how many job orders do you have? I want to know at any given time how many different employers have asked the Job Service to help fill a hiring need. On February 1st the answer to my question was 784. That's 784 different job orders that likely represent more than 1,000 individual jobs that need to be filled. At both ends of the employment numbers—high unemployment and low unemployment—the work of the Job Service is important to our businesses and community.

Mr. Chairman, Members, allow me to highlight one last partnership that is so important to workforce needs in Yellowstone County and our region. Local Job Service representative John Harper has been working Big Sky Economic Development, the Billings Chamber of Commerce, City College of MSU-Billings, and several private-sector partners on a very important workforce development event. Workforce 2023 is planned for March 19th and will pull together our community for a critical discussion of our current and future workforce needs. Our hope for this event is that we will foster the development of a regional workforce development vision and strategy that will help assure that our businesses have the workers they need today and ten years from now. John's partnership with us on this event has been outstanding.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to share these comments.

Respectfully submitted,



Steve Arveschoug
Executive Director