

Comments regarding HB 379

The process for formation of a library district is set forth in state law quite clearly. The bill being considered is neutral regarding that process, granting no shortcuts to forming a library district.

However, in the instance where an existing city library is proposed to become the district library, this bill seeks to give the community the option to choose which governmental entity will provide the administrative and financial management services to the district – the county or the affected city.

Under current law, in a circumstance whereby a city library becomes the district library, the city finds itself removed from a 100% role in administering the library through appointed Trustees, to 0% when it becomes the district library, even though they may own the physical property. And simultaneously, the county moves from 0% involvement to 100% involvement. No one has any choice under the current law as presently written to do any differently.

This bill would give the local community the choice of which governmental entity would take care of the administrative affairs of running the district. Some communities would opt to go with the county, while others would opt to have the city government serve in the same capacity for the district as they did when the library was a city library.

In many counties, this may be considered a moot issue, as the only existing city library may be the library located in the county seat. In that case, it may be viewed as immaterial whether the city government or the county government manages the administrative and financial affairs of the district. However, there are numerous cities across Montana that have city libraries, serving both the city patrons and patrons from the surrounding area, funded at present by city taxes alone. When these libraries are removed many miles from the county seat, it makes practical sense to have the nearest unit of local government provide the administrative and financial services the district requires when a district is formed and the city library becomes the district library. Under current laws, those services are mandated to be provided by a government that may be an hour's drive or more from the library.

I encourage your support for these amendments, as they are intended solely to give proponents of the formation of a library district which involves an existing city library the option of choosing which governmental entity will provide administrative services to that library – the county, or the city which has historically been providing those services to that library.

Thank you very much!

Respectfully,



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