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SB 147

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Madame Chair Bangerter and Members of the Committee,

My name is Gloria Roark, and I reside in Missoula, and I rise in support of SB 147.

My husband and I own a ranch in the Blackfoot Valley, and it has been in our family for over 100 years. When one considers farming and taking care of the land, meeting all the expenses including taxes and insurance for this number of years, it is discouraging to know that we now have further obstacles such as our local and state government interfering.

My husband has operated a business in Missoula for over 50 years, and several years ago he was diagnosed with a terminal illness. Our plans were to retire and build a home on our ranch and follow our dreams. Upon checking with Rural Initiatives, we find that the building codes are so staggering and costly that we may be only able to buy a home that already exists near our ranch. SB147 would allow us to develop our land as is necessary in order to conduct a profitable farming operation. And, if SB147 does not pass, we will have further obstacles, as our local government is working towards the "takings" of land for open space. They have proposed that if we give a portion of land to one of our grandchildren, that we put an equal amount of acreage into a conservation easement. Further, in spite of thousands of acres of land already in conservation, they are claiming that it is necessary to "raise food for Missoula County," This would justify the "takings." It is a well known fact that Missoula does not have a long growing season, especially the Blackfoot Valley. It is a good place to raise grain, hay, and cattle...it is not a "banana belt," for fruits and vegetables. They further are trying to entice ranchers to agree to "The Right to Farm Ordinance," which is really another type of control.

We have one form of government in Missoula, as City Council and the Commissioners are of one accord, driven by the radical environmentalists who's goal is to end agriculture, and promote Open Space.

I am asking you to please pass SB 147. Support and protect the ranchers of Montana, and let us do what we do best.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here with you today and to give you my testimony.

"So God Made a Farmer"

Paul Harvey

1978

And on the 8th day, God looked down on his planned paradise and said, "I need a caretaker." So God made a farmer.

God said, "I need somebody willing to get up before dawn, milk cows, work all day in the fields, milk cows again, eat supper and then go to town and stay past midnight at a meeting of the school board." So God made a farmer.

"I need somebody with arms strong enough to rustle a calf and yet gentle enough to deliver his own grandchild. Somebody to call hogs, tame cantankerous machinery, come home hungry, have to wait lunch until his wife's done feeding visiting ladies and tell the ladies to be sure and come back real soon — and mean it." So God made a farmer.

God said, "I need somebody willing to sit up all night with a newborn colt. And watch it die. Then dry his eyes and say, 'Maybe next year.' I need somebody who can shape an ax handle from a persimmon sprout, shoe a horse with a hunk of car tire, who can make harness out of haywire, feed sacks and shoe scraps. And who, planting time and harvest season, will finish his forty-hour week by Tuesday noon, then, pain'n from 'tractor back,' put in another seventy-two hours." So God made a farmer.

God had to have somebody willing to ride the ruts at double speed to get the hay in ahead of the rain clouds and yet stop in mid-field and race to help when he sees the first smoke from a neighbor's place. So God made a farmer.

God said, "I need somebody strong enough to clear trees and heave bails, yet gentle enough to tame lambs and wean pigs and tend the pink-combed pullets, who will stop his mower for an hour to splint the broken leg of a meadow lark. It had to be somebody who'd plow deep and straight and not cut corners. Somebody to seed, weed, feed, breed and rake and disc and plow and plant and tie the fleece and strain the milk and replenish the self-feeder and finish a hard week's work with a five-mile drive to church.

"Somebody who'd bale a family together with the soft strong bonds of sharing, who would laugh and then sigh, and then reply, with smiling eyes, when his son says he wants to spend his life 'doing what dad does.'" So God made a farmer.