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HB 38

Montana State Librarian Testimony

Short Title: Transfer GIS Responsibilities to State Library

House Bill 38
"Transfer GIS Responsibilities to State Library"
Proponent Testimony by Jennie Stapp
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Montana State Library
444-3116
Before the
House State Administration Committee
January 11, 2013

Mr. Vice Chairman, members of the committee, for the record my name is Jennie Stapp and I am your Montana State Librarian.

- You may wonder why a librarian is before you to discuss the topic of GIS. It's simple: libraries are in the business of helping people find the information and data they need. Through the work of the staff of the State Library and with the support of the Montana Land Information Act and the Montana Land Information Advisory Council, we collect, integrate, enhance, disseminate and preserve geospatial data that empowers employees of Montana's public and private sectors to conduct business quickly and efficiently.

- The transfer you are considering is being proposed following a lengthy review conducted by a task force that was seated by Governor Schweitzer. This task force was charged with finding efficient alternatives for the maintenance and delivery of GIS information. The major conclusion of this task force was that the mission of the Base Map Service Center, the program that staffs the work of MLIA, more closely aligns with the strategic goals of the State Library than the State Information Technology Services Division. Specifically, the mission of the Base Map Service Center, which is to "develop, support, deliver and promote enterprise geographic data and the spatial technologies to all levels of government and the public," naturally aligns with the State Library's goals to acquire and manage relevant quality content; to provide libraries, agencies, partners and patrons with convenient, high quality and cost-effective access to library content and services; to provide consultation and leadership to enable its patrons and partners to reach their goals; and to promote partnerships and encourage collaboration among its partners and patrons.

- Because of our similar missions, the Governor's task force concluded that the BMSC should be administratively merged with the State Library's Natural Resource Information System. This proposal received support from the Governor's Office in May 2011 and from the State Library Commission, our governing body, that June. We have been operating as one program, under an interagency agreement, since September 2011.

- The Montana Land Information Act has resulted in many positive developments since it was first passed in 2005. For instance, Montana has a robust collection of statewide GIS data that is the envy of many states. We have staff available to serve as GIS consultants. These staff spends hundreds of hours annually traveling the state to offer GIS services to underserved communities.

- Since the initial transfer of the BMSC to the State Library, staff from the MSL and DOA has worked hard to find efficiencies to reduce costs and the financial load on MLIA funds. Because our two staffs now operate as one, we have been able to eliminate duplicate data and GIS services and better coordinate staff activities, bringing Montana closer to achieving the Governor's goal to provide more efficient GIS services to our entire state. As a result, in FY2013 more than $252,000 was awarded in grants to local governments to further the goals of MLIA. This is the most money awarded to these constituents since the act was first adopted.

- This good work began under the leadership of the DOA and continues to develop through the transfer of the Base Map Service Center to the State Library. We are very pleased to have the opportunity to continue these efforts so that GIS may continue to develop as a vital information resource in Montana.

I am available to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you