



MONTANA SECRETARY OF STATE

Comm Secy

LINDA McCULLOCH

EXHIBIT 2
DATE 02/05/2013
HB 327

HB 327: Youth Election Judges
House State Administration, RM 455
February 5, 2013 @ 8 AM
Secretary Linda McCulloch's Testimony

Good morning Madam Chair, members of the committee. For the record, I am Montana Secretary of State Linda McCulloch. Thank you Representative Wilmer for carrying this legislation, and for your continued support of youth civic engagement in government.

House Bill 327 addresses the critical shortage of election judges across the state by enabling Montana's future generations to become engaged and active citizens.

Over the years, Montana has seen a steady decline in the number of citizens willing to serve as election judges. It's a shortage that cannot be ignored as these are the folks charged with helping voters, supervising polling place activities, and keeping Election Day lines to a minimum.

By allowing 16 and 17 year-olds the opportunity to serve as election judges, this Legislature will not only help to minimize the crowds on Election Day, you will be providing an exceptional civic experience to Montana students.

It would be an experience similar to that of a Legislative Page - who at 16 and 17 years-old you trust to carry out their duties at the Capitol in a professional and organized manner. Are these bright and talented Montanans not also capable of helping out at polling places?

In the 2012 General Election, more than 63% of election judges were over the age of 61. More than 28% were over 71 years-old. I applaud these workers for taking the time to help administer Montana's elections, and know many of them would appreciate working with folks who are comfortable with the technology and modern equipment necessary for running elections.

Currently, 39 states allow high school students to serve as Election Judges. In Montana, all new judges have to attend hands-on training conducted by the Election Administrator and receive a "Certificate of Completion" before serving as a judge. That's in existing law, and this bill doesn't change the requirement.

As a teacher, I believe it is important for the adults in a student's life to be kept in the loop about a request to be out of school - which is why this bill includes a provision requiring written consent from the student's parents or guardian, and principal, before they can serve as an election judge. Students who are homeschooled will need only written permission from their parent or guardian.

As you consider this bill, consider that the younger a person gets involved in elections for the first time, the more likely they are to vote at each and every election throughout their lives. I'm proof of that. When I was in the 7th grade, I worked on my first campaign, which was a county commission race. It was a turning point for me and the impetus that has fueled my lifelong passion for elections and voting.

There are many young adults who would treasure the opportunity to participate in the elections process, but perhaps don't know how to get started. This bill gives them the chance to get involved, and make a difference in their community and state.

I urge this Legislature to not turn its back on the importance of civic education. Vote "yes" on HB327 and support Montana's students and the 56 county Election Administrators who administer fair and accurate elections in our state.

I'll close by reminding this committee that this bill prevents students from serving as the Chief Elections Judge. It also provides counties the choice to allow student judges at their polling places. The choice is left entirely up to the Election Administrator, who knows their pool of election judge applicants and what will work best in their county.

This is also not a gateway bill to open the door to allowing 16 and 17-year-olds to vote. That has never been the intent, and it is not being considered by my office.

HB 327 is an optional solution for counties experiencing a shortage in election judges, and it uniquely supports the education of our future generations. I am available to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your time today.