

Board of County Commissioners
Yellowstone County
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Fax

To: Rep. Pat Ingraham	From: Bill Kennedy, Commissioner
Fax: (406) 444-4825	Pages: 2 pages (includes coversheet)
Phone (406)	Date: 4/15/13
Re: SB 405	Phone: (406) 256-2701 Fax: (406) 256-2777

Urgent **For Review** **Please Comment** **Please Reply**

Representative Ingraham, please see the following letter from me regarding SB 405.

Thank you for your time.

Bill Kennedy

Yellowstone County



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April 15, 2013

Dear Representative Ingraham and House State Administration Members,

I am Bill Kennedy, a Yellowstone County Commissioner. I want to express my opposition to SB 405, which would place a measure on the ballot to eliminate the opportunity for voters across Montana to register and vote on Election Day. I'm sorry that I can't be there in person to testify.

More than 2600 Yellowstone County residents have used the opportunity to register and vote on Election Day since that opportunity was first established in 2006. I know they do so for a lot of very legitimate and different reasons.

Often times, it's through no fault of their own that they arrive to vote on Election Day and find out they're not registered, even though they believed they were registered. Some people have registered through DMV only to find that their names do not show up on the voter list.

Some needed to register to vote because a number of problems that had occurred. I don't believe that any of these people should be denied the chance to vote. It's their right to vote, be it by mail-in ballot or on Election Day.

You may hear a lot about the long lines in some of our communities on Election Day, Billings included, with some wanting to put the onus on the people trying to register and vote on Election Day. I urge you NOT to put the blame on these electors. We know we had problems in Billings with long lines and we're working to make that system better. Our county voted to consolidate polling places in the city of Billings down to one location, which proved to be a challenge given the large turnout in this Presidential election. We could use improved parking, staffed drop off boxes for mailed ballots, better instructions at the beginning of lines to promptly direct people to either their precinct or to a same day registration line, and better online services. We need more election day staffing to adequately handle this. Yellowstone County's delay in counting ballots after the close of election was not due to the folks who registered on Election Day.

Our challenge as a state is to make it easier and more efficient for legitimate and qualified residents to vote, not to eliminate the opportunity for them to vote, as this bill does. We do not want to keep anyone from voting on Election Day.

Lastly, SB 405 limits people the Right to Vote, I strongly urge you to not pass this bill.

Thank you,


Bill Kennedy
Yellowstone County Commissioner

BK/ptb