

SENATE JUDICIARY

Exhibit No. 26
Date: 2/16/15
Bill No. SB262

Comments for SB262, CSKT Compact
Montana senate Judiciary Committee Hearing, February 16, 2015
Helena, MT

From: James T. Paugh

I am opposed to SB262

I remember about 50 years ago some of the citizens of Montana thought we should have a better system of managing water use rights. They should be centralized by state government, because some counties did not have a very good system.

I was involved with several agricultural organizations and one, or several of them, thought we should have a meeting and have some knowledgeable people explain the concept. We had a meeting in the courtroom of the Gallatin County Courthouse. As I remember it there were at least 50 or so people there. We had a lawyer and several other local people. The last speaker was Wes D'Ewart. He had been a United States Congressman from the Eastern District and lived on a ranch West of Wilsall. He was retired from a career as a U. S. Forest Ranger and had worked in the Park County area.

Mr. D'Ewart explained some of the advantages of County Courthouse control, the records would be locally available, could be up dated and errors corrected easily. His last statement as I clearly remember it was: "You people should understand that when your water rights get to Helena, they are half way to Washington D.C."

In my opinion, if this Compact is approved, most of Montana's water West of the Continental Divide, will be under the control of a 5 member appointed Board for the Compact, not the members of the tribe, who will be working in Kahoots with the BIA, a part of the United States Government.

It would be fine with me if this Legislature, as a tribute to the memory of Congressman D'Ewart, did not approve of this Compact. Montana would then, still have its Constitutionally owned water.

Jim Paugh
Coffee Creek, MT 59424
Phone (406) 566-2255

