

HOUSE BILL NO. 341
INTRODUCED BY J. ANDERSEN

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT APPROPRIATING MONEY TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES FOR ADDITIONAL LOCAL OMBUDSMAN SERVICES FOR ELDERLY MONTANANS UNDER THE OFFICE OF LEGAL AND LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN SERVICES."

WHEREAS, local ombudsman services are an integral part of providing a wide range of services for older Montana citizens as mandated by the Older Americans Act of 1965, as amended, and the Montana Older Americans Act, Title 52, chapter 3, part 5; and

WHEREAS, according to the 2000 Census, the population of rural Montana has increased to 117,239, and 15,329 or 1.7% of elderly residents are over 85 years of age; and

WHEREAS, Montanans over 65 years of age account for 13.41% of the population and that percentage will only increase as the Baby Boom generation, those born between 1946 and 1964, reaches retirement age; and

WHEREAS, the availability and access to services is diminishing as more and more Montanans are reaching 65 years of age and becoming eligible for Medicare and Medicaid; and

WHEREAS, residents of long-term care facilities and their family members require assistance in dealing with problems of daily care, quality of life, and resident's rights; and

WHEREAS, the best way to provide assistance is at the local level by trained persons such as the ombudsmen who are in the facilities on a regular basis and who may be called to private assisted living facilities, group homes, and private homes; and

WHEREAS, there is a need for monitoring caretakers, such as family and nursing homes, so that the elderly have someone to whom they can report any abuse without fear of retaliation; and

WHEREAS, the need for information on ombudsman services for the elderly is necessary in maintaining the quality of care and life of Montanan's aging population.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

NEW SECTION. **Section 1. Appropriation.** There is appropriated \$240,000 from the general fund to the department of public health and human services for each of fiscal years 2004 and 2005 for the purpose of

providing additional local ombudsman services under the office of legal and long-term care ombudsman services, as provided for in Title 52, chapter 3, part 6.

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