

To the Economics Affairs committee in regard to SJ30,

My name is Larry Stewart. I have resided in Eureka Montana for 40 years. I have spent nearly the entire 40 years as a small business owner operator. All my businesses have included employees and crossed the path of government bureaucracy. I currently am involved with land development, housing construction, civil infrastructure on many levels and own and operate Abayance Bay Marina on the shore of Lake Koocanusa.

I have recently started a small vineyard at the foothills of the mountains just outside Eureka Montana "This location on a historical note was picked by the Wisconsin fruit company in 1921 to start an orchard in which the highline railroad system was used to share fruit grown from Wisconsin to Montana and share an equal percentage of that year's yields to the communities across the highline" I currently have 2800 vines and plan on adding roughly another 1000 vines to my vineyard in the next year. It is both my passion for agriculture and recognition of the need for cultural diversity and locally spun commerce to keep a healthy community and system in place for the future that I plow down this path.

In 2019 I employed 58 people and watched the pains of covid rip through our community and the entire country. As a private sector owner operator, I met those challenges much the same as I have met the many challenges that Montanans have been faced with. As always time brings change and change forces us to evolve in the new face of diversity. It is becoming clear that less and less people care to take on the challenges of dealing with government agencies and the red tape of bureaucracy that it entails. With two beer and wine licenses of my own I am well aware of the department of revenues path in the execution and operation of those licenses. I would rather not dive into my frustration of that system, but rather ask the committee to please recognize the need to open doors for the few of us that are left willing to chance new possibilities that will keep the ever-growing complexities of doing business in this already over regulated and difficult road in Montana.

With all this said I am asking you to strongly look at the last section of Brian Maguire's testimony labeled "What does this Vision look like" and consider those of us trying to move forward in a new and growing wine industry in the state of Montana.

Cheers to a glass of Montana grown and produced wine!

Best regards,

Larry Stewart