

Good afternoon members of the Committee:

In an effort to encourage the preservation of Montana's cultural heritage, I urge you to support the Montana Historic Tax Credit (MHTC). As you have heard, for 27 years the historic MHTC assists local economies striving to make their communities more appealing for visitors and residents alike. My experiences with the non-profit Preserve Montana, both as a Board member and Board chair, have given me the privilege of witnessing what can be accomplished when partnerships set their mind to promoting heritage through historic preservation. These partnerships involve citizens and organizations as well as the State of Montana, with the support and assistance of the MHTC.

There are many examples of success stories credited, in part, to the historic tax credit. The benefits of the credit represent an investment in the future of our communities. One of these success stories concerns the oldest hotel in our state, and one many will recognize for the first-class attraction it has become.

The first time I saw the Grand Union Hotel in Fort Benton was in 1976 when I was 16 years old following the Lewis and Clark trail with my family. I recall us peeking through a dusty window into the lobby of the Grand Union which was in a shambles at that time. "What a shame." My mother had said. Now, fast forward 48 years and visitors to Fort Benton and the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument enjoy fine dining and lodging at the Grand Union, fully refurbished, owned and operated by individuals who take great pride in their management of the hotel and of its dramatic restoration. It isn't just the Hotel, it is the whole town that is rejuvenated by the focus on cultural heritage and the crucial role Fort Benton played in the settling of Montana. Now when I visit the town, the many museums and restoration of the old fort and main street

remind me of how far Fort Benton has come in promoting and rebuilding itself along with employing its citizens in welcoming all. Montana should continue to fund the historic tax credit, and given its long-standing record of success, it should increase the percentage of funding it provides for those interested in investing in the historic preservation of their communities. Further, the allowance of tax credit transferability would be helpful for all involved.

Thank you,

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