

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
January 12, 1981

The meeting of the House Judiciary Committee was called to order at 8:00 am by Chairman Kerry Keyser presiding. All committee members were present. Jim Lear, Committee Attorney, was also present.

HOUSE BILL 71 REP. KEEDY, chief sponsor, said this bill is to strengthen the open meeting law. It will make the statutes more compatible with the state constitution. KEEDY quoted from Montana's constitution, Article 2, Section 9 stated it is the "right to know" and from Section 10, dealing with the right of privacy. Current law requires meetings to be open. This bill would put into the law a notice requirement of an upcoming meeting. The bill would allow individual privacy only to who the person applied. The right should not be used as a tool of concealment.

The reasons for calling a meeting must be set forth in the minutes. By providing the abbreviated minutes the public will be able know the decision of the body. The 30 days restrictive would be increased to 90 days, according to KEEDY's bill. The court is given an opportunity for an in camera review.

In closing REP. KEEDY believes we should not be afraid of the public. The legislatures can work as representatives of the government in view of the public.

MIKE MELOY, Montana Press Association, was happy to see this bill be introduced. The open meeting law is a result of a series of compromises from a 4-5 year period. It is now fairly workable. MELOY noted the weakness is there is no provision in the statute. Subsection 1 is probably the most important part of this bill. The courts have made determinations of whether the public has been notified. The bill is flexible. MELOY feels it is very important to have minutes the court can look at to see what happened in the meeting. The only way the public knows what has happened is by looking at the meeting minutes. A closed meeting would still have to keep minutes according to this bill.

To increase the restrictive period from 30 days to 90 days will hold up many of the things committees will do; however, a 30 day period is actually too short. MELOY supports this bill.

DOROTHY ECH, Senator - District 39, said this bill addresses many questions that were brought to her task force. People don't understand the rules of public meetings and this bill would clarify them.

DAVID SEXTON, Montana Education Association, is in favor of this bill. He believes open meetings have to be announced to the public if they are actually going to be open. The new section of this bill makes it explicit, but more specific language should be in effect. The individual knows whether his case is to be personal by whether the meeting is open or closed. Written testimony was given. EXHIBIT 1

MARK MACKIN, Legislative Citizen Coalition, strongly supports this bill.

There were no further proponents.

CHAD SMITH, Montana School Boards' Association, was not opposed to the bill as such, but they find it hard to comply with. SMITH stated there are instances where it is not good to have a meeting open. The matter of individual privacy is addressed by this bill. It is hard for the school boards to know what is required of them. SMITH feels some of the amendments in the bill will cause more problems, one of which is notice. SMITH stated it would be a serious mistake to change the revision as to who exercises the ability to have a meeting closed or open. SMITH feels the closed meeting would be pointless if the minutes were to be made public. The 90 day restrictive is excessive.

There were no other opponents.

REP. KEEDY, in closing, stated the present law is difficult for board members to apply in every case. This bill will make it clear of what the duties are. Minutes of a closed meeting would be kept confidential and only judges would be able to look at them in a court case.

Questions were asked by committee members including:

REP. YARDLEY asked if there is a reasonable notice period presently in the law. SMITH answered there was no provision that spells out what a reasonably notice actually is. What is reasonable in one case may not be another.

REP. DAILY asked if a teacher could close a meeting. REP. KEEDY said no. The body of the meeting members would. As it is now in the law the presiding officer would.

REP. ANDERSON asked if items which were not on the agenda were discussed what the bill would in fact do to stop this. REP. KEEDY said if something came up the bill would specify the meeting be adjourned to another set meeting.

REP. KEYSER asked if there has been any suits filed in state court because a person has not been notified of the 30 day notice. REP. KEEDY said not to his knowledge. MELOY stated he knew of some instances.

There was no further discussion on House Bill 71.

HOUSE BILL 44 REP. BRAND, chief sponsor, noted this bill concerned the remains after a person passes away in a rest home or hospital. This bill would require when a person dies their heirs be notified immediately and to prohibit final disposition of the body for a two day period while heirs are being notified. An amendment was given to the committee members. EXHIBIT 2. EXHIBIT 2+ was also given to members.

BRAND feels the section requiring the embalment of a person with 48 hours of death should be changed to 12 or 24 hours. BRAND also feels when people are admitted into nursing homes a paper should be signed as to what to do with the body should an emergency occur.

There were no other proponents.

ROLAND PRATT, Montana Funeral Directors, is opposed to the bill. Many hospitals already have a form patients sign should in case an "emergency" should occur. With the proposed amendments the funeral directors would not openly support or oppose the bill.

CHAD SMITH, Montana Hospital Association, feels this bill is directed at hospitals. Hospitals should be allowed the flexibility to call someone in to remove the body immediately. This bill would not be applicable to all Montana communities since it would be necessary to send the body to facilities that could keep the bodies. SMITH does not see any point in the bill.

M. E. "MICKEY" NELSON, Montana Coroner's Association, opposes the bill as written. NELSON stated no body is released to a funeral home unless it is to a responsible person. He feels it should be stated as a financial responsible person.

There were no other opponents.

REP. BRAND, in closing, stated he does not feel the public will lose any money on what this bill does. A lot of people are thinking of different ways that the body can be disposed of instead of going to a mortuary.

REP. HANNAH asked who benefits from this type of bill. REP. BRAND said the families of the deceased will benefit.

There was no further discussion on House Bill 44.

HOUSE BILL 68 REP. PISTORIA, chief sponsor, said this bill would be a repeal of the conciliation law that was put into effect in 1963. From the calls and letters PISTORIA has received this program has not been a success. He feels it is a waste of taxpayers money.

PISTORIA feels the churches have had this responsibility taken away from them with the enactment of this bill. There is a duplication of this type of service with the churches and social workers already performing this service. A letter was passed out to each committee member. EXHIBIT 3. PISTORIA's slogan for this bill is how can you get two mad people together?

There were no other proponents.

DIANNE MANN, Family Court Services, believes the conciliation law is very important, and it would be regressive to repeal the law. Even though a couple may not reconcile, there are many other things to consider. As professional counselors they are concerned with custody and support of the children, visitation rights, etc. MANN questioned why this bill was even being brought up. It was very consuming and expensive of the taxpayers money.

MANN noted people do not always take personal matters to their clergyman. No work is being taken away from the churches, and her agency has tried not to take work away from other agencies. MANN stated her work is the type of social work that is being used by the public. EXHIBIT 4 was handed out to the committee.

GARY JENSEN, Seventh Day Adventist Church, said as a pastor more of his time is being taken up by this type of work. Any spouse contesting a divorce may file a petition with the court. No further action can take place for 30 days. This gives the couple a cooling off period. JENSEN noted many people are not willing to go to pastors with problems. The reconciliation court allows some time for the people involved. Just knowing people have a recourse available makes them feel much better.

JAN BROWN, Montana Association of Churches, says the conciliation courts are effective especially for minors. She does not feel the conciliation has changed in 1981 as compared to 1963. EXHIBITS 5, 6, and 7 were given to committee members.

There were no other opponents.

REP. PISTORIA, in closing, stated he was representing the people who have called and written letters to him concerning this. He stated social workers do more and better work as compared to family court services.

REP. HANNAH inquired how many churches the Montana Association of Churches represented. BROWN stated there were nine denominations.

REP. CURTISS asked if a federal grant funded the reconciliation court. MANN said funding is by the approval of the local Board of County Commissioners.

Judiciary Committee
January 12, 1981
Page 5

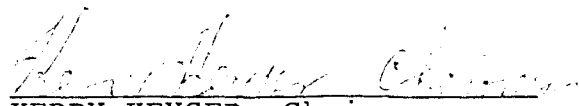
REP. CURTISS inquired if there is some competition of what SRS and this agency does. MANN replied there is not competition but some duplication.

REP. EUDAILY asked what the expenses involved in this type of program are if the county strickly pays. REP. PISTORIA said \$60,000 was needed to pay for this by Cascade County.

Further discussion was held by the committee.

The meeting adjourned at 10:20 am.

Respectfully submitted,


KERRY KEYSER, Chairman

Maureen Richardson, Secretary

EXHIBIT 1

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO HOUSE BILL 71

Amend NEW SECTION -- SECTION 1 by adding the following sentence:

In addition, reasonable written notice shall be delivered to any individual who is to be the subject of discussion or action at any regular or special meeting.


David Sexton
Montana Education Assn.
January 12, 1981

HB 44

Representative: Joe Brand

Prohibiting final disposition of a deceased person until authorities at the place of death or officials having jurisdiction have made a two-day attempt to notify next of kin or other responsible parties.

AMENDMENT

---to exclude those individuals whose remains have been donated to medical science according to the Anatomical Gift Act, 69-2315, Revised Codes of Montana 1947.

NCA.

AMENDMENT TO HB 44

Amended line 11: Insert after "death:

In those instances where prior written authorization
to remove the deceased boby has not been obtained
any-----

You may want to consider reducing the time period
to 24 or 12 hours.

Jan. 20, 1979

The Arizona House and Const. Committee
on HB 200 and SB 69.

Gentlemen,

Having just learned of the bills in committee referring to the Court of Conciliation, I would like you to include this letter in opposition to the continuation of this agency.

I have had personally, two encounters with the Court of Conciliation in Great Falls. Once in July 1975 and again in Nov. 1978.

In each instance, I have found that the appointments were a waste of time. I would suggest that your committees run a small ad to enlist opinions of people who have been in contact with this agency. I have seen other opinions stated in the paper in Great Falls which would support my opinion. I look upon this agency as another bureaucratic means of providing income to people who are grossly unqualified, (some by their own marital and social mores), to consider anyone elses. There are qualified social workers and juvenile offices on the payrolls now, who are better able to investigate and propose remedies. In the marital arena, there are well qualified counselors and religious leaders to aid people.

Recently, my attorney asked this agency for a transcript of my 1975 appointment, their reply was that they couldnt find the file.

Note - In all, gentlemen, I have so e that I could have received more conciliation and aid, from the fellow who picks up my garbage.

Sincerely,

Dr. R. H. Hinz

R. H. Hinz

P.O. Box 701 - Great Falls, Mt.

727-546

cc: R. Hinz

(I would also like to state, that I do not know R. Hinz and this

FAMILY COURT SERVICES
The Eighth Judicial Court of Conciliation
325-2nd Avenue North, Room 111
Great Falls, Montana
761-6700 ext. 257

What does Family Court Services do for the District Court?

Reconciliation Counseling, in accordance with MCA 40-3-111
Contested Child Custody Investigations, in accordance with MCA-40-4-215
Contested Child Custody Counseling
Premarital Counseling for Minors, in accordance with MCA 40-1-213
Contested Property Settlements
Establish Amount of Child Support
Visitation Disputes

Other Counseling Services:

Marriage Counseling
Divorce Counseling
Parent/Child Conflicts
Youth work
Domestic Violence Intervention
Alcohol/Drug Abuse Counseling
Family Counseling
Group Work

Educational Services:

Speak to school classrooms,
churches, clubs
Offer workshops, parenting
classes
Serve on local Boards of
Directors

Who is Family Court Services?

Director/Counselor:	Diana M. Mann, M.S.W, A.C.S.W.
Counselor:	Denis McLeavy, M.A.
Counselor:	Carla Tadewaldt, B.S.
Administrative Secretary:	Jeanne Gamble
Secretary/Receptionist:	Sally Meade

Who is eligible for service?

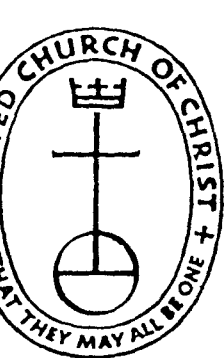
Anyone having a personal relationship problem.

Who refers people to Family Court Services?

Some clients are referred by the District Court or attorneys,
many others are self-referrals.

Is there a fee?

Yes, and our fee is negotiable, based on ability to pay.
No fee is charged for reconciliation counseling, premarital
counseling for minors and youth counseling.



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

P.O. BOX 6303

GREAT FALLS, MONTANA 59406

John M. Kading, Pastor

Church Office: (406) 453-4316

8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. (Mon-Fri)

Pastor's Home: (406) 761-5548

Intern's Home: (406) 727-7472

January 9, 1981

House Judiciary Committee
Kerry Keyser, chairperson
Capitol Station
Helena, Montana 59601

Dear Persons:

It has come to my attention that House Bill #68 (HB68) which your committee will be reviewing Monday, January 12, at 8:00 am, is an attempt to revoke our state's Conciliation Law. I further understand that a part of the reasoning behind this effort is that churches and ministers ought to be providing the services this law provides.

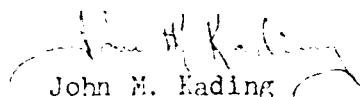
I write to STRONGLY OPPOSE this bill! As an ordained minister who wouldn't mind being all things to all people, I know this is not true. First of all, statistics bear out the fact that far less than half the people in Montana are unchurched. It would be very unlikely they would seek out any services from the church in the time of family trauma. Secondly, of those churched, the minister often becomes the counselor for one or the other in a divorce action, but often not for both. And when both do come for counseling prior to a divorce, the minister is not equipped to deal with the innuendo of law which is often involved in child custody, visitation, property settlements, etc. Therefore it is vital that an agency such as Family Court Services, provided for by the Conciliation Law, exist to 1) work with those people with whom the church has no contact, and 2) to supplement the work of the church with families of common interest.

In a day when divorce is so common and divorce laws allow for the action to be final in so brief a period, often before emotional trauma can be dealt with, a Conciliation Law is vital help in 1) providing a 'cooling off' period in which both parties can be counseled and retain a sense of integrity through the ultimate action, and 2) provide that any children involved are humanely treated in the settlement.

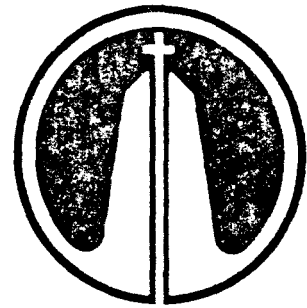
I have lived in Montana for five years, and have been impressed in that time with our Conciliation Law and the work of what is now known in Great Falls as Family Court Services. I must reiterate that it is a most humane law concerned with all parties involved and that Family Court Services works hand in hand with clergy and churches in providing a better quality of life for the citizens of Montana.

Thank-you for your consideration, and again I urge you to NOT CONSIDER any bill which would revoke the existent Conciliation Law.

Most sincerely;


John M. Kading

Sharing facilities at 2900 Ninth Avenue South with Christ Lutheran Church



College of
Great Falls

January 9, 1981

Mr. Kerry Keyser
House Judiciary Committee
Capital Station
Helena, MT 59601


Dear Mr. Keyser:

It has been brought to my attention that a proposal has been introduced in the legislature to repeal the Marriage Conciliation Law. I am opposed to this development, and would strongly urge you and your committee to act against the proposal. The Marriage Conciliation Law has provided badly needed Family Court Services in many areas of the state. I have made numerous referrals to Family Court Services in Great Falls, and know first-hand of the values of the program.

We live at a time when numerous pressures, including state laws and programs, are making it more and more difficult for families and marriages to survive. The Marriage Conciliation Law is one example of positive influence by the state on family life. I strongly urge you to help keep the law on the books.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

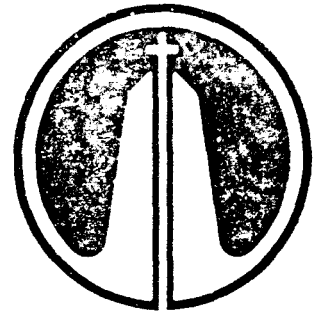
Sincerely,


Rev. Steve Tokarski
Campus Chaplain
College of Great Falls

cjb

1301 - 20th Street South
Great Falls, Montana 59405
(406) 761-8210

Sisters of Providence



College of
Great Falls

January 9, 1981

Mr. Kerry Keyser
Chairman of Judiciary Committee
Capitol Station
Helena, Montana 59601

Dear Mr. Keyser:

It is my understanding that a bill has been proposed, entitled HB 68, to repeal the Conciliation Law which is the law under which the Conciliation Program operates.

Although I have a great deal of respect for Mr. Paul Pistoria who is sponsoring the law, I do not agree with his basic premise that the churches in the community could handle the problem adequately. It is my experience that, although there are a number of clergy qualified to do such counseling, there is a real need for continuing the existence of Family Court Services. There are a number of areas where the Family Court Counselors can provide invaluable services in helping people to work out their marital problems and differences especially in cases where there is a strong possibility of conciliating contested divorce suits.

As a clergyman and a sociologist, it is my recommendation that the proposed HB 68 to repeal the Conciliation Law be rejected on the grounds that irreparable harm will be done and a much needed component of the criminal justice system will be eliminated.

Sincerely

Rev. Anthony F. Gregori

Rev. Anthony F. Gregori, Director
Criminal Justice Program
College of Great Falls

sm

January 9, 1980

Nancy Roberts
1220½-7th Avenue North
Great Falls, Montana 59401

Mr. Kerry Keyser
Chairperson
House Judiciary Committee
Capitol Station
Helena, Montana 59601

Dear Mr. Keyser:


I would like to take a moment to express my concern in reference to the bill to repeal the Conciliation Law, HB68.

I have been receiving services from Family Court Services, 8th Judicial Court of Conciliation in Great Falls, since October of 1978. Initially, I came for marital counseling, but in time my husband and I understood that we were involved in an unhealthy, battering relationship and decided to divorce. Diana Mann counseled us through the process, aiding us in avoiding a lot of the aggressive behavior that frequently occurs during a divorce situation.

Based upon my experience, I feel that Family Court Services is an excellent community tool, both in maintaining healthy relationships and dissolving unhealthy ones as painlessly as possible.

I sincerely hope that this agency is not discontinued.

Sincerely,


Nancy Roberts

January 9, 1980

Caryl Borchers
3251-4th Ave. South
Great Falls, MT 59405

Mr. Kerry Keyser
Chairperson
House Judiciary Committee
Capitol Station
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Mr. Keyser:

I am sending this letter to ask the House Judiciary Committee to vote against House Bill 68, to repeal the Conciliation Law.

I have been working with Family Court Services since 1967, and feel that it is vital to do preventative family counseling. I have worked with Family Court Services both as a volunteer and as a professional, and have seen the positive results of their program. We are currently working with Family Court Services and a local court for mandatory counseling sentencing for both alcohol abuse and domestic violence. We feel this is a necessary approach if we are ever going to solve the problem of domestic violence. We also refer couples to do domestic violence counseling through Family Court Services.

Sincerely,



Caryl Borchers, Director
Great Falls Mercy Home

State Task Force Chairman
on Spouse Abuse

FAMILY COURT SERVICES
CASELOAD
July 1, 1980 thru December 31, 1980

* * *

Type of Counseling	Number of Cases	Percentage of Caseload	Adults Counseled	Youth Counseled, Involved
Individual:	86	41%	70	16
Adult:	70			
Marriage problem:	(16)			
Divorce counseling:	(5)			
Custody information:	(2)			
Family problem:	(2)			
Visitation problem:	(5)			
Domestic violence:	(18)			
Alcohol problem:	(5)			
Financial problem:	(4)			
Other relationship:	(6)			
Employee Advisory Program:	(7)			
Teen:	13			
Parental divorce:	(1)			
Family problem:	(4)			
Visitation:	(1)			
Alcohol problem:	(2)			
Other relationship:	(4)			
Custody:	(1)			
Children:	3			
Parental divorce:	(2)			
Visitation:	(1)			
Conjoint:	108	51%	215	66
Marriage counseling:	23	11%	46	
Divorce counseling:	11	5%	22	
Reconciliation counseling:	9	4%	18	
Petition for conciliation:	(8)		(16)	
Non court-ordered:	(1)		(2)	
Premarital:	23	11%	46*	11**
Minor:	(23)		(46)	(11)
Adult:	0			
Post-wedding:	1		2	
Custody:	19	9%	40	25
Family Self-Determination:	(12)	(6.5%)	(26)	(17)
Evaluation:	(3)	(1%)	(6)	(3)
Partial evaluation:	(3)	(1%)	(6)	(3)
Information:	1	(.5%)	(2)	(2)
Visitation:	18	8%	35	30
Financial:	4	2%	6	
Family:	14	6%	30	27
Group:	5 groups	2%	30	19
Couple's Violence Prevention:	1		4	
Batterer's Group:	1		2	
Youth Support Group:	1			19
Premarital Group at Malmstrom	1		20	
Hypoglycemia Group:	1		4	
Total caseload, 6 months:	213		345	128

* 16 & 17 yr. olds counted as adults in this category

** these are children or pregnancies of minors wishing to marry



68
Exhibit 5

MONTANA RELIGIOUS LEGISLATIVE COALITION • P.O. Box 1708 • Helena, MT 59601

January 12, 1981

WORKING TOGETHER:

American Baptist Churches
of the Northwest

American Lutheran Church
Rocky Mountain District

Christian Church
Disciples of Christ
in Montana

Episcopal Church
Diocese of Montana

Lutheran Church
in America
Pacific Northwest Synod

Roman Catholic Diocese
of Great Falls

Roman Catholic Diocese
of Helena

United Church
of Christ
Montana Conference

United Presbyterian Church
Glacier Presbytery

United Methodist Church
Yellowstone Conference

United Presbyterian Church
Yellowstone Presbytery

TO: House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Jan Brown, Legislative Liaison, M.R.L.C. *Jan Brown*

RE: Opposition to House Bill 68, repealing the Montana
Conciliation Law

The Montana Association of Churches supports conciliation
courts as an effective crisis-intervention technique
in dealing with marital and family strife. (Refer to
our 1979 position paper on "Funding of Conciliation
Courts".)

We therefore oppose House Bill 68.

Montana Religious Legislative Coalition
(M.R.L.C.)
P.O. Box 1708
Helena, Montana 59601
MONTANA ASSOCIATION OF CHURCHES
POSITION- 1979

FUNDING OF CONCILIATION COURTS

Other M.A.C. Position Papers:

Environment and Land Use
Government - Institutions (Us and Them)
Tax Exemption
Victims of Crime Compensation
Released Time for Religious Education
Legislating Morality
Welfare and Financial Support
Introduction and History of M.R.L.C.
Energy and Environment
Gambling
Home Health Care
Pornography
Pre-Marital Counseling for Minors

**Member Units of the Montana Association
of Churches**

American Baptist Church
American Lutheran Church
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Episcopal Church, Diocese of Montana
Lutheran Church in America
Roman Catholic Church -
Diocese of Great Falls
Diocese of Helena
United Church of Christ
United Methodist Church
United Presbyterian Church -
The Presbytery of Glacier
The Presbytery of Yellowstone

**Single Member Congregations
[non-voting]**

Christ's Church On The Hill, Great Falls
Holy Trinity Serbian Orthodox Church, Butte



**Montana
Religious Legislative Coalition [MRLC]
Committee of the
Montana Association of Churches**

Cover design by Barry Lannan, Helena

FUNDING OF CONCILIATION COURTS

POSITION STATEMENT

The Montana Association of Churches supports conciliation courts as an effective crisis-intervention technique in dealing with marital and family strife. In order to promote the effectiveness and availability of conciliation counseling services, we urge the Montana legislature to authorize counties to establish a self-supporting economic base for conciliation courts.

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

The conciliation court is a counseling service provided by the judiciary. Sometimes referred to as "court-connected counseling", the conciliation court offers short-term counseling and utilizes a crises-resolution approach in dealing with couples and families torn by marital strife. Conciliation courts vary in size, powers and goals, but all operate with the stated purpose of preserving, protecting and promoting family life and the institution of marriage.

The benefits of conciliation courts do not rest solely with reconciliation and divorce prevention. Upholding the best interests of the child(ren) is the primary goal of the conciliation court. If the family cannot be reconciled, conciliation and mediation services are provided to help make the dissolution less hostile and damaging. The counselor's familiarity with court procedure and attitudes combine with the creative use of the court's power to facilitate agreements on custody, visitation and support. Conciliation counseling minimizes adversarial fights, court time and the need to "strike back" in post-divorce litigation.

The Montana Conciliation Law, passed in 1963, allows but does not mandate a District Judge to establish a conciliation court in his district. The law further provides that conciliation courts will be funded by the county. Since no fee is charged to clients who utilize conciliation counseling, the county budget is the court's sole source of revenue.

This method of funding can present major problems for conciliation courts. When a county faces serious budgetary problems, non-mandated services such as conciliation courts are deleted or severely curtailed. The result is that, even though the District Judge may determine that a conciliation court is necessary in his district, the establishment of such a court will be financially unfeasible.

As an example of how the funding is handled in other states, legislation in California and Oregon had demonstrated that a self-supporting economic base for conciliation courts helps insure the continued availability and effectiveness of conciliation counseling. These two states have instituted a funding mechanism called the filing fee structure. This method allows counties to raise the marriage license and divorce filing fees \$2 and \$5 respectively, provided the county matches these funds and uses the money derived solely for supporting the conciliation court. This funding mechanism is permissive and not mandatory; the county may reject the conciliation service and/or the filing fee structure.

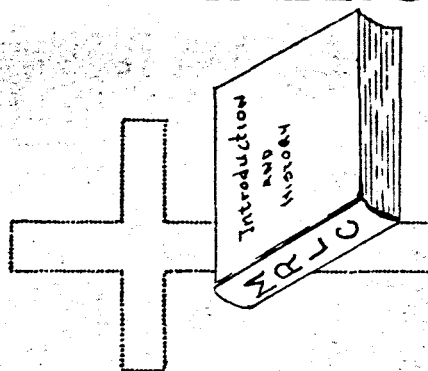
There are several advantages to this funding mechanism:

- 1) Financial support for conciliation services comes from those most likely to use them.
- 2) The filing fee plan is comparable to pre-paid health insurance in that one pays for the service even though a claim may never be filed.
- 3) The additional fee provides a necessary and valid social service for a population which could conceivably use the service but which may not be utilized at all. Just as all people who pay property taxes may never need the schools their taxes support, all couples who marry may never require conciliation services.
- 4) The filing fee method is an efficient and inexpensive collection system. It requires no additional administrative expenses since the county clerk continues to collect the fees.

There are currently four conciliation courts operating in Montana: Bozeman, Great Falls, Helena and Kalispell. Together, these four courts serve nearly half the state's 56 counties. Increased accessibility to and availability of conciliation courts is necessary if our state is to respond adequately to the needs of parents and children experiencing the effects of divorce. Providing a self-supporting economic base for conciliation courts is a positive step toward accomplishing this.

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY OF M.R.L.C.

Exhibit A



Montana
Religious Legislative Coalition [MRLC]
Committee of the
Montana Association of Churches

Montana Religious Legislative Coalition
(M.R.L.C.)
P.O. Box 1708
Helena, Montana 59601

MONTANA ASSOCIATION OF CHURCHES POSITION - 1979

M.R.L.C. INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY

Other M.A.C. Position Papers:

Environment and Land Use
Government - Institutions (Us and Them)
Tax Exemption
Victims of Crime Compensation
Released Time for Religious Education
Legislating Morality
Welfare and Financial Support
Energy and Environment
Gambling
Home Health Care
Funding of Conciliation Courts
Pre-marital Counseling for Minors
Pornography

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Diocese of Helena
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Montana Religious
Legislative Coalition (MRLC)
P. O. Box 1708
Helena, MT 59601

(M.R.L.C.), a committee, of the Montana Association of Churches, was formed in early 1974 when denominational executives of the Montana Association of Churches each appointed a representative to the Coalition.

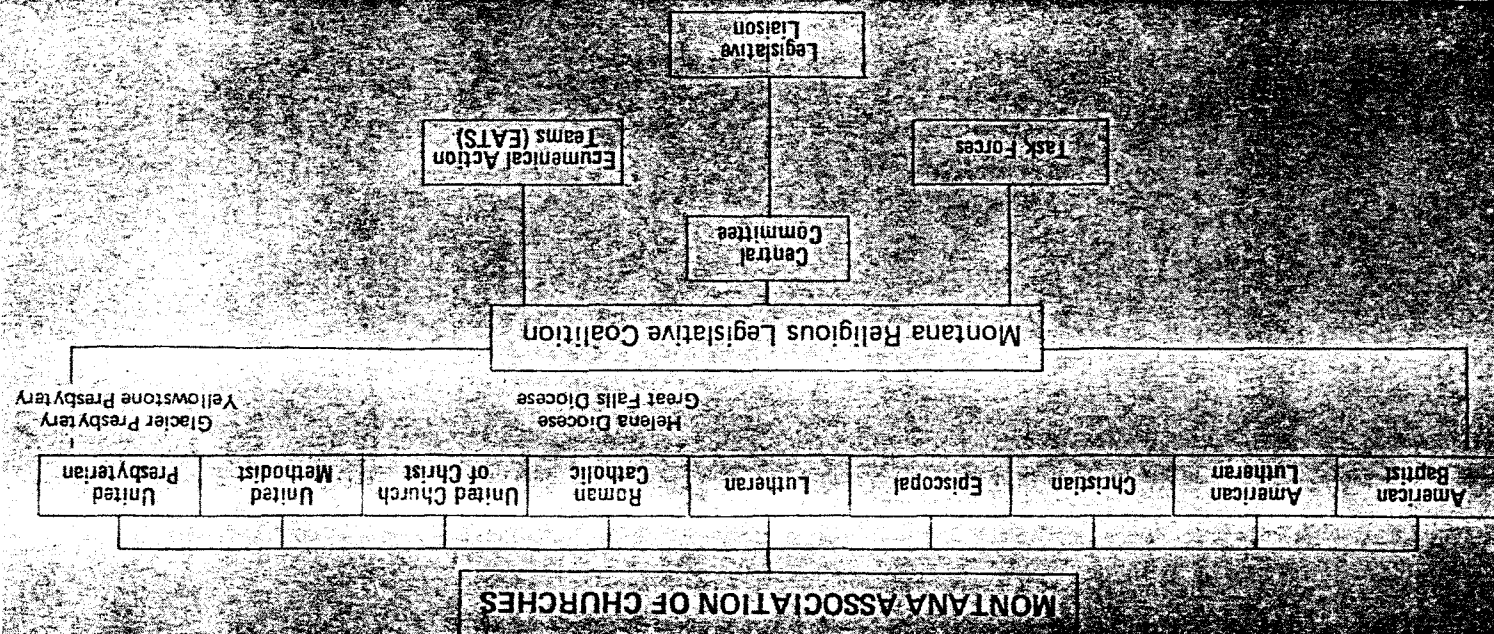
Patterned after the Minnesota Joint Religious Legislative Coalition, M.R.L.C. was organized primarily to state matters of social-human-religious conscience before the governmental bodies of Montana, especially the Montana legislature. In February 1974, a day-long seminar was conducted to acquaint representatives of each denomination with the work of the Minnesota Joint Religious Legislative Coalition. The director of the Minnesota J.R.L.C. explained how it operated, alerted the Montana group as to the possible problems that might arise, and presented information that helped them organize the M.R.L.C.

Areas for the first position papers were chosen and task forces were appointed to research and write the papers. Four papers were published and distributed in the fall of 1974: "Introduction and History of M.R.L.C.," "Environment and Land Use," "Tax Exemption," and "Government - Institutions," which developed into a filming of a half-hour documentary on conditions at the state institutions in Boulder and Warm Springs entitled "Us and Them."

A mailing list was developed; and a legislative liaison, Mrs. Jan Brown of Helena, was hired. Ecumenical Action Teams (EATS) were organized, consisting of persons throughout the state's legislative districts who were willing to communicate regularly with their legislators on the M.R.L.C. concerns. During the 1975 legislative session the major efforts of M.R.L.C. resulted in the passage of a tax exemption bill and the killing of bills that would have expanded gambling.

In August of 1975 work began on developing position papers for the 1977 legislative assembly. Suggestions for study areas were submitted and voted upon by the M.R.L.C. Central Committee; and task forces were appointed to develop the following position papers: "Innocent Victims of Crime Compensation;" "Gambling;" "Home Health Care;" "Welfare and Financial Support;" "Released Time for Religious Education;" and a study paper on "Legislating Morality - Morality and the Law."

M.R.L.C.'s 1977 lobbying efforts resulted in bills being passed for victims of crime compensation, increased funding for aid to families with



education; and the defeat of all bills to further liberalize gambling. Our one failure was in the attempt to achieve increased funding for home health care programs.

Papers to be presented to the 1979 legislative assembly are as follows: "Energy and Environment," "Gambling," "Home Health Care," "Funding of Conciliation Courts," "Pre-marital Counseling for Minors," and "Pornography."

The Montana Religious Legislative Coalition's Central Committee is composed of a representative from each of the nine member denominations of the Montana Association of Churches. These representatives are appointed for three-year terms. The Central Committee meets at least four times a year in Helena. John Frankino, of Helena, director of the Montana Catholic Conference, is the chairman of M.R.L.C. Mrs. Jan Brown of Helena continues to serve as the legislative liaison and coordinator of M.R.L.C. The office is located at 530 No. Ewing Helena, with a mailing address of P.O. Box 1708 Helena, MT 59601. The phone number is 442-5825 extension 53.

PROCESS

M.R.L.C. (a committee of the Montana Association of Churches) determines issue areas; appoints task forces and research teams; reviews task force position papers; makes recommendations to the M.A.C. Board of Directors; coordinates action in public forum.

M.A.C. Board of Directors

reviews position papers submitted by M.R.L.C.; makes recommendations to M.A.C. Annual Assembly.

M.A.C. Assembly delegates from member churches;

final action on positions and policy.

M.R.L.C. position papers must receive unanimous approval to be adopted.

Ecumenical Action Teams EATS

organized in state legislative districts to help legislators and their constituents understand

VISITORS ' REGISTER

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