## MONTANA STATE SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE MINUTES OF THE MEETING

#### January 22, 1987

The twelfth meeting of the Senate Judiciary Committee was called to order at 10:00 a.m. on January 22, 1987 by Chairman Joe Mazurek, in Room 325 of the state Capitol.

ROLL CALL: All members were present with the exception of Senators Galt and Pinsoneault, who were absent.

RECONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL 23: Senator Halligan encouraged his amendments be accepted to Senate Bill 23, the open meeting law bill. He explained amendments 5, 7 and 8 on attached Exhibit 1. He said the bill now focuses on opening and assuring that meetings of associations of schools, like the MHSA, is specifically included in the open meeting law.

PROPONENTS: Gordon Morris, Montana Association of Counties, supported the bill because the Association of Counties is not brought into the bill in its amended form.

Nancy Newcomer, League of Women Voters of Montana, supported the amended bill.

Sandy Chaney, Women's Lobbyist Fund, supported the bill also. Written testimony attached as Exhibit 2.

Bruce W. Moerer, Montana School Board Association, stated he would like some clarification of SB 23. He said the Association wanted to know how they would notify people on a statewide basis of meetings. He explained there are statewide publications used by state agencies, but only state agencies can use them. He stated the Association questions their obligation to the law on who they notify and how, about a meeting, with the amended form of SB 23. He said MSBA would be glad to comply with it.

Kim Wilson, representing Common Cause, distributed a form which showed his amendments. Form attached as Exhibit 3. He supports the amended bill, but his changes make the language more consistent in sections 2-3-201 MCA through

2-3-221, MCA, which has inconsistent terms and definitions. Section 2-3-203 has a laundry list of groups that must follow the law. Mr. Wilson explained his proposal will put all the groups involved under one definition of public body. He said there is still no notice provision in the bill. He told the committee he also drafted a generalized policy statement on notice. He felt his language would help the problem of notice in this bill. He said Common Cause was in support of the amended bill, but would prefer his suggested changes.

OPPONENTS: Dan Freund, Montana High School Association, testified he was not against the bill, but needed clarification also. Mr. Freund gave the committee a copy of the MHSA adopted open meeting rule. (Exhibit 3a) He felt they have operated under the open meeting law, and he would answer any questions.

DISCUSSION OF SENATE BILL 23: Senator Blaylock questioned if public money is handled and used by MHSA.

Mr. Freund replied 75% of their income comes from basket-ball tournaments, which comes from the taxpayers.

Senator Blaylock asked if the MHSA would allow their books to be audited by the Legislative Auditor's office.

Mr. Freund said there was no problem with that. Mr. Freund mentioned money from tournaments was not tax dollars as no one is required to go and pay money at a tournament.

Senator Blaylock felt it would be wise for the MHSA to be cooperative with the legislature with an audit so we can report to the people about MHSA's operations.

Senator Beck asked if there was any provision for notices in the bill. Senator Halligan responded no, statute now does not give a notice provision.

Senator Yellowtail inquired of Senator Halligan, how would he respond to the applicability and implications of this law for the MSBA.

Senator Halligan stated they are included in the bill the way it is amended, and they do use part of public dollars. He said they probably have a network through the schools to the school boards if they have a publication to the schools about their meetings. He said the committee will have to deal with a notice provision.

Senator Mazurek asked if the Association of Counties and the MSBA object to their meetings being open to the public. Mr. Moerer of the MSBA said it doesn't bother them at all. The Association of Counties said they will follow strict interpretation of the open meeting laws, but we really don't want to be held to the notice requirement of 2 weeks notice before the meeting. He felt there was no notice question because the notice provision was elsewhere in state law in sections 2-3-102 and 2-3-104, MCA.

Senator Blaylock questioned Mr. Morris if his organization is run with public funds. Mr. Morris said that is correct. Senator Blaylock asked if citizens are free to come to their meetings. Mr. Morris answered they can without a doubt.

Senator Blaylock asked Bruce Moerer if anyone would be shut out of a school board meeting, because that is what happened to him several years ago. Mr. Moerer responded that can't happen now.

Senator Halligan closed by saying there should be no special legislation directed at one group, but when one is talking about one entity having a substantial amount of public funds involved in its operation, they should comply to the open meeting law. He hoped the committee will look at his amendments seriously, and also Kim Wilson's draft. He hopes the committee will support the bill as amended.

CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL 108: Senator Bishop, District 46, Billings, introduced Senate Bill 108, and said the bill would provide elections instead of appointments of district and supreme court justices. He said it would amend Article 7, Sections 6, 8, and 9 of the Montana Constitution. He said this did not arise because of the appointment of Judge Filner of the 13th Judicial District. He said on page 2, lines 5-18, everything is stricken except the provision of vacancy in the office of the Supreme Court Justice or District Court Judge by election provided by law. He explained the appointment process used at present. He said we have a judicial nominating commission that is set up by the MCA. He stated the commission is composed of seven members, including four lay people, two lawyers, and one district court judge. Thirty days after a vacancy occurs, this commission takes applications and screens the applicants. The commission

then chooses three, or not more than five applicants, in order of votes received by the commission and then gives it to the Governor so he can appoint the new applicant. He commented when a judge is appointed, it precludes any other lawyer filing for that office through the elective process. Senator Bishop said one reason no one would file is if one lost an election to a sitting judge, he might not think very kindly of the lawyer that tried to defeat him. He feels it has turned into a life-time appointment because the state at the present time has 37 district judges and 7 supreme court judges, and that 17 got there by appointment. He stated it takes five to ten years before a judge reaches peak efficiency, and by that time most are ready to retire, so we should get younger people in these positions. Senator Bishop closed by stating the people should decide who should be on the bench.

PROPONENTS: There were no proponents.

OPPONENTS: Jeanne Marie Souvgney, Montana League of Women Voters, read written testimony by M. S. Davis of Helena in opposition to Senate Bill 108. (Exhibit 4)

DISCUSSION ON SENATE BILL 108: Senator Crippen inquired as to how much the public gets involved in the appointment of judges now. Ms. Souvgney replied the voters don't have issues in front of them to base their choice, so they should not vote on electing judges. Senator Crippen asked if the position of the League of Women's Voters was that all judges should be appointed. Ms. Souvgney answered, yes.

Senator Crippen stated the public has little access to give input to the commission. Ms. Souvgney said she has more faith in the merit of the applicants picked by the commission than the election process.

Senator Beck asked Senator Bishop how much a statewide election would be, other than a general election. Senator Bishop said he was not sure, but the committee should think of the public involvement impact in this bill. Senator Beck stated maybe we should leave a vacancy open until the next general election so we don't have a special statewide election everytime there is a vacancy. Senator Bishop said that was fine with him.

Senator Mazurek asked what if a judge dies early in his 6 year term, and it is several years before a general election. Senator Bishop said there should be a special election in that case

Senator Bishop also commented it does not involve a lot of public funds because the candidates pay for most of their campaign.

Senator Beck felt the election of judges should be correlated with the elections that are held every two years so we don't run into special elections.

Senator Bishop felt that was a practical way to handle it. Senator Bishop closed the hearing on SB 108, and hoped the committee would support the bill.

CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL 112: Senator Mazurek, District 23, introduced SB 112 for the Department of Administration, which administers the Tort Claims Act. He said after the Tort Claims was acted on and the Workmen's Compensation scandal in the 1970's, it was felt there should be some checks or controls on the settlement of claims made against the state. said small claims have become a paper burden to the division, so the Tort Claims Division would like to have the authority in matters under \$25,000 to make the claims and settlements without having to petition and go to a judge for an approval. He said there is ample public review of these settlements because of the audits this division goes through, so it will help the division dispose of some of the excess paperwork if this bill passes.

PROPONENTS: John Maynard, Tort Claims Division, supported the bill because of the paperwork that must be done for the smallest claims and settlements. He said 360 claims came into his office in fiscal year 1986. He felt the division should not pay \$150 in administration expense for a \$60 claim. He said in a year the division does 15-16 claims over \$25,000, and if you set the limit at \$5,000, the caseload would jump to 32 a year.

John Northey, Legislative Auditor's Office, said he only raised the question of dollar limits. He said the Auditor's Office set up a review procedure whereby the claims were reviewed by a judge. It was not a trial; it was a third party view. He stated the Department of

Administration, through Mike Young, the administrator of the division, agreed with this concept. He said the auditor's office is looking for controls in the system and he felt there should be a limit on the dollar amount in this bill, but questioned the \$25,000 dollar limit because of the caseload at that level.

OPPONENTS: There were no opponents.

DISCUSSION ON SENATE BILL 112: Senator Blaylock questioned if there would be problems putting the limit at \$10,000. Mr. Maynard responded \$10,000 would put them at a caseload of 24 a year, and there was no problem with that.

Senator Bishop inquired what sort of procedure does the district court judge use. Mr. Maynard told the committee the judge usually signs a form and testimony is not presented.

Senator Halligan asked if there is a review of the settlements before they are final. Mr. Maynard stated the state adjustor in their office has the authority up to \$5,000, but any settlement over that has to be approved by the administrator. He said all of these settlements are public record.

Senator Mazurek closed the hearing on Senate Bill 112.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON SENATE BILL 20: Senator Mazurek explained an example of a lumber salesman who has to give a 20 day notice to a job site before he can get a lien on the materials he has sold to the foreman of the job. He said the lumber salesman lets the notice go for 60 days, so he can only go back the last 20 days to reclaim any materials, so the lumber salesman lost the lien right on the first 40 days. Senator Mazurek stated on page 18, lines 12-18 shows without a doubt that one has to give the buyer 20 days notice before one can take a lien. Notice must be verified by the "contracting owner" and a copy of the notice of completion is published once a week for three consecutive weeks in newspapers.

Senator Crippen said the problem is the filing of the lien on page 9 of the bill. He felt the bill is not stating the same procedures in different parts of the bill. Senator Mazurek said the bill doesn't take away the right to claim a lien if it passes the 20 day mark, but it doesn't clearly set forth the way or time for filing a lien with the clerk and recorders office. No action was taken.

ACTION ON SENATE BILL 108: Senator Beck asked Senator Bishop what his main concern was. Senator Bishop said he didn't agree with the system now because it causes it to be a life time appointment. Senator Beck said he didn't believe in special elections for a vacancy of a judge's position. Senator Beck said to use retired judges until you have a regular election. Valencia Lane commented the bill would allow the next legislature to amend the election laws on how judges are positioned. Senator Bishop moved the bill DO PASS.

Senator Mazurek stated he had problems with electing judges instead of appointing them.

Senator Blaylock said the nominating committee can pull some "fast ones" on the Governor too by nominating only one good candidate out of three which they submit to the Governor. He said it is not a fair process because of the nominating committee.

Senator Mazurek commented if a lawyer runs in an election for a judge position and loses, the person who won might take retribution against the losing lawyer's clients if they have to come before the winning judge.

Senator Blaylock said lawyers who donate money to a lawyer's campaign for a judge position will have to vote for the lawyer they donated to.

Senator Halligan thought on page 4, lines 9 and 11 were vague with the word "judicial". Valencia Lane said it could be clarified by inserting the language in amendments 2 and 3 on the Standing Committee Report. (Exhibit 5) She said it would have to be changed in the title also. Senator Halligan made a substitute motion to insert the amendments on Exhibit 5. The motion carried. Senator Bishop felt the bill will open the position to more qualified people. The motion DO PASS AS AMENDED, CARRIED.

ACTION ON SENATE BILL 112: Senator Blaylock moved to adopt the amendments on the Standing Committee Report. (Exhibit 6).

Senator Yellowtail wanted to know why Senator Blaylock wanted to reduce the amount.

Senator Mazurek said a judge will look at the settlement closer when it is around \$10,000--more so than if it were \$25,000. Senator Mazurek felt it was a good compromise.

The motion carried to lower the amount. Senator Blaylock moved the bill DO PASS AS AMENDED. The motion CARRIED unanimously.

ACTION ON SENATE BILL 96: Senator Mazurek pointed out the bill doesn't contain a maximum penalty. He said the amendments don't even make a mandatory minimum for elder abuse.

Senator Yellowtail suggested making the offense of elder abuse a felony. Senator Mazurek asked if he wanted it a felony on the first or second offense. Senator Beck said it should be the first time, and Senator Blaylock felt the second offense should be a felony. Senator Brown asked what the difference was between misdemeanor and felony. Senator Mazurek said the punishment is greater if it is a felony. A straw vote was taken showing the majority of the committee wanted to mandate a felony into the bill but give the judge discretion with judgements because of the difference of circumstances pending in each case.

ADJOURNMENT: The committee adjourned at 12:07 p.m.

ENATOR JOE MAZUREK, Chairman

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#### ROLL CALL

Judiciary			COMMITTEE			
50th	LEGISLATIVE	SESSION		1987		

Date Jam. 720 198

NAME	PRESENT	ABSENT	EXCUSED
Senator Joe Mazurek, Chairman	1		
Senator Bruce Crippen, Vice Chairman	1		
Senator Tom Beck	1		
Senator Al Bishop	*		
Senator Chet Blaylock	. 4		
Senator Bob Brown	*	·	
Genator Jack Galt	Exercised		
Senator Mike Halligan	1 1		
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enator Bill Yellowtail	*		
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committee on Sinote Gudicially

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	VISITORS' REGISTER			
NAME	REPRESENTING	BILL #	Check Support	
ART GUITTEH	Mirc			
John Maynard	Tort Claims Div.	SBIIZ.		
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SENATE JUDICIARY EXHIBIT NO. BILL NO.

#### PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO SB 23

SB 23, introduced compy (white), to amended as follows:

1. Title, lines 5 through 8.

Following MEETINGS OF" on line 5
Strike: reminder of line 5 through "ACTIVITIES" on line 8
Insert: "SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS"

2. Page 1, line 13.

Following: "-ageneies-"

Insert: "of public agencies"

3. Page 1, line 15.

Following: "-governmental-"

Strike: "the following"

Insert: "public or governmental"

4. Page 1, lines 15 through 17.

Following: "bodies -;- "

Strike: the remainder of line 15 through "(a)"on Tine 17

Insert: ","

5. Page 1, line 18.
Following: "of the state"

Strike: ";"
Following: "er"

Insert: ", including associations of schools, or"

6. Page 1, line 19. Strike: "(b)"

7. Page 1, line 21.

Strike: "; or"

Insert: "must be open to the public."

8. Page 1, lines 22 through 25.

Strike: subsection (c) in its entirety

# WOMEN'S LOBBYIST

FUND Box 1099
Helena, MT 59624
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January 22, 1987

Testimony on SB 23

Mr. Chairman and members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Sandy Chaney and I am speaking to you today on behalf of the Women's Lobbyist Fund. WLF is a coalition of 39 organizations, representing over 6,500 women throughout the state. Women's Lobbyist Fund supports SB 23 as amended.

This proposed legislation would require the Montana High School Association to comply with open meeting laws. In the past, MHSA has discouraged rather than encouraged public attendance at its meetings. Yet the association is funded by public dollars and must be accountable for the important decisions it makes—decisions that shape high school athletic programs and extracurricular activities.

Women's Lobbyist Fund is specifically concerned with the decisions that the MHSA makes with regards to educational equity. We continue to strive for equal opportunity for women in education as well as in all aspects of our lives. WLF believes that keeping the door open to the Montana High School Association's meetings keeps the door open for further progress in educational equity.

SB 23 will ensure that the voice of the public is heard before MHSA makes decisions that will affect a number of parents and young adults. Women's Lobbyist Fund urges you to vote "yes" on SB 23.

Common Cause

SENATE JUDICIARY EXHIBIT NO. 3

DATE Man. 2

BILL NO 5/3 ,23

2-3-201 - The legislative finds and declares that public bodies in this state, as defined in this section, exist to aid in the conduct of the people's business. It is the intent of this part that actions and deliberations or all public bodies shall be conducted openly. The people of this state do not wish to abdicate their sovereignty to the agencies which serve them. Toward these ends, the provisions of this part shall be liberally construed.

#### 2-3-202 - Meeting Defined.

As used in this part, "meeting" means the convening of a quorum of the constituant membership of a public body, whether corporal or by means of electronic equipment, regardless of the location of the meeting, to hear, discuss, or act upon a matter over which the public body has supervision, control, jurisdiction or advisory power.

#### 2-3-203 - Meetings to be open to public exception.

- 1. All meetings of public bodies must be open to the public. The following bodies shall constitute public bodies;
- a. boards, bureaus, commissions and agencies of the state or any political subdivision of the state, or
- b. organizations or associations supported in whole or in part by public funds which recommend or dictate policies and procedures governing publicly funded activities.
  - 2. Provided, however, the presiding officer of any meeting

SENATE JUDICIARY

EXHIBIT NO.\_\_\_

DATE Gam, 22, 196

BILL NO. 5B 23

may close the meeting during the time the discussion relates to a matter of individual privacy, and then if, and only if, the presiding orficer determines that the demands of individual privacy clearly exceed the merits of public disclosure. The right of individual privacy may be waived by the individual about whom the discussion pertains, and in that event, the meeting shall be open.

3. A meeting may also be closed to discuss a strategy to be followed with respect to collective bargaining or ongoing litigation when the demands of individual privacy clearly exceed the merits of public disclosure.

#### 2-3-204 - Notice

- 1. A public body must provide public notice of all meetings.
  - 2. The notice must include:
- a. a statement of the time, place, nature of the meeting and name of the public body.
- b. a statement of the purpose of the hearing and any proposed decisions to be made at the hearing.
- 3. Notice must be published or aired in the local or state media most likely to reach the members of the public to be affected by the decisions to be made at the meeting.

2-3-212 - Keep.

SENATE JUDICIARY

EXHIBIT NO. 3

DATE Jan. 22 1987

BILL NO.58 23

2-3-212 - Keep

#### 2-3-213 - Voidability

Any decision made in violation of 2-3-203 may be declared void by a district court having jurisdiction. A suit to void any such decision must be commenced within 30 days of the date of the release to the public of minutes of the meeting.

2-3-221 - Keep as is.

DATE 4 am 2d 701 BILL NO. 58 108

FYHIRIT NO.

The League of Women Voters of Montana

election rather than appointment.

22 Jan 87 SENATE JUDICIARY

Testimony prepared by M.S. Davis, Helena, Montana

S8 108, Sen. Bishop, sponsor - an act proposing amendment to the Montana constitution to provide for the filling of vacancies in judicial offices by

The League of Women Voters opposes SS 108.

This bill would remove the governor's authority to fill judicial vacancies caused by death or resignation. The state constitution presently allows this with the participation of the Judical Nominating Commission offering the governor a list of qualified nominees.

The method of selecting judges in Montana has been the subject of debate periodically over the years. The last major discussion was during the constitutional convention. Those who favored an all-elected judiciary compromised with those favoring merit selection of judges by appointment.

The League studied the method of selecting judges in 1974 and it was the consensus of our membership that an appointed judiciary offerred more than an elected judiciary. The main problem with electing judges is having judicial candidates campaign against one another. The costs are high, especially for a statewide campaign. Funds must be raised and virtually all these funds come from attorneys and/or litigants who may appear before the court.

Judical campaigns are not very informative for the voting public. Judicial candidates are loath to speak their minds on judicial philosophy or court administration issues. On the other hand they are not permitted by the Canons of Ethics to discuss particular cases or the specifics of how they might rule from the bench. As the candidates are not running on partisan slates, the voters have very little to guide them in choosing in a contested election. In an election where the candidate is not opposed, only a write-in campaign could prevent the filed candidate from winning the office. This proposed amendment to the constitution would not require that a first time unopposed candidate for judicial office face a retain or reject vote.

By and large the races of the Supreme and district courts do not receive much attention from the voters. It is often difficult to attract qualified atterneys to the bench because of the campaigning involved with the office. The Laague believes that scrapping the merit selection provisions in the state constitution is a step backward and urges that SB 108 be given.

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APPEARING ON	WHICH	PROPOSAL:	·56.23					
DO YOU: SU	PPORT?	<u> </u>	AMEND?	0	PPOSE?			
COMMENTS:							4	
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PLEASE LEAVE ANY PREPARED STATEMENTS WITH THE COMMITTEE SECRETARY.

NAME: Mr. Monthley DATE: 1/22/2
ADDRESS: Show 135-81, Caputal
PHONE: 4443203
REPRESENTING WHOM? Jy. Anglity.
APPEARING ON WHICH PROPOSAL:
DO YOU: SUPPORT? AMEND? OPPOSE?
COMMENTS: Jungon - question high dollar trivil Perhaps realized 25,000 to 5,000

PLEASE LEAVE ANY PREPARED STATEMENTS WITH THE COMMITTEE SECRETARY.

#### PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO SB96

1. Page 1, line 23.
Following: "offense"

Strike: "shall"

Insert: "may"
Following: "fined"
Insert: "an amount"

2. Page 1, line 24.
Following: "not"

Strike: "less than \$1,000" Insert: "to exceed \$10,000"

3. Page 1, line 25.
Following: "not"

Strike: "less than 1 year"
Insert: "to exceed 10 years"

C:\LANE\WP\SB96AMD.

#### ROLL CALL VOTE

SENATE COMMITTEE JUDICIARY	<del></del>	
Date <u>Januauh 22</u> 1987 Bil	1 No. <u>SB 108</u>	Time <u>//.50 am</u> )
NAME	YES	NO
Senator Joe Mazurek, Chairman	×	
Senator Bruce Crippen, Vice Chairman	<u> </u>	
*Senator Tom Beck		X
Senator Al Bishop	<u> </u>	
Senator Chet Blaylock	X	<del></del>
Senator Bob Brown		
Senator Jack Galt		
Senator Mike Halligan	<u> </u>	<del></del>
Senator Dick Pinsoneault		
Senator Bill Yellowtail		<u> </u>
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Motion: Do Passed as amender	nol (the bill	<u>O),</u>

## STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT

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MR. PRESIDENT Judiciary	
We, your committee on	106
having had under consideration	No
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CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT REQUIRING ELECTION TO FILL VOPFICE	ACANT JUDICAL
Respectfully report as follows: That	No1.65
BE AMENDED AS POLLONS:	
1. Title, line 7. Strike: "JUDICIAL" Following: "OFFICES" Insert: "OF SUPREME COURT JUSTICES AND DISTRICT COUR	RT JUDGES*
<pre>2. Page 4, line 9. Strike: "judicial" Pollowing: "offices" Insert: "of supreme court justices and district court</pre>	rt judges"
3. Page 4, line 11. Strike: "judicial" Following: "offices"	
Insert: "of supreme court justices and district cour	ce judges
	SENATE JUDICIARY
	EXHIBIT NO. 5
AND AS AMENDED DO PASS	DATE 1-22-87  BILL NO. 5.8.108
SEMETALE DED	

Senator Magurek

Chairman.

### **STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT**

					•	January 22	19	87
MR. PRESIDE	NT							
We, your c	ommittee on .		Senate J	UDICIARY	***************************************	••••		
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	BE AMEND	ED AS FOLDO	ws:					
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DO PASS								
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Chairman.