#### MINUTES

### MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 52nd LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION

#### COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Call to Order: By DIANA WYATT CHAIR, on March 5, 1991, at 3:00 p.m.

#### ROLL CALL

#### Members Present:

Diana Wyatt, Chair (D)
Jessica Stickney, Vice-Chair (D)
Arlene Becker (D)
Vivian Brooke (D)
Dave Brown (D)
Brent Cromley (D)
Paula Darko (D)
Budd Gould (R)
Stella Jean Hansen (D)
Harriet Hayne (R)
Ed McCaffree (D)
Tom Nelson (R)
Sheila Rice (D)
Richard Simpkins (R)
Norm Wallin (R)

Members Excused: Reps. Barnett, Dowell, and J. Rice

Staff Present: Bart Campbell, Legislative Council Lois O'Connor, Committee Secretary

Please Note: These are summary minutes. Testimony and discussion are paraphrased and condensed.

#### **HEARING ON HB 813**

#### Presentation and Opening Statement by Sponsor:

REP. O'KEEFE, House District 45, Helena, stated HB 813 creates a county records preservation fund and increases the fee for recording a document by mechanical means from five dollars a page to six dollars a page. It sets up a system by which money will become available to preserve the records that exist in county courthouses around the state.

## Proponents' Testimony:

Douglas Olson, Attorney, Helena, submitted written testimony.
EXHIBIT 1

Mike Stephen, Montana Clerk and Recorders Association, stated records need to be retrievable because they are the only records available.

Linda Stoll-Anderson, Lewis and Clark County Commissioner, supported HB 813.

Opponents' Testimony: None

#### Questions From Committee Members:

REP. CROMLEY stated that in Yellowstone County all records are on microfilm, and asked Mike Stephen if it was the same in other counties. Mr. Stephen replied that many counties maintain records by hand and some are computerized. It depends on the level that each courthouse has. Smaller counties maintain records by hand. REP. CROMLEY asked where the other five dollars goes. Mr. Stephen said it goes into the County General Fund. It may or may not be spent for the preservation of records.

REP. BROOKE asked Linda Stoll-Anderson if putting records on microfilm would create another FTE in many counties. Ms. Stoll-Anderson replied no. A committee was formed to review the problem of backlog in the offices of the Clerk and Recorders and Clerk of the District Court. The county be look at a contract with a private vendor to get rid of the backlog.

REP. SIMPKINS asked Ms. Stoll-Anderson what Lewis and Clark County used the five dollars in the General Fund for. Ms. Stoll-Anderson said it is shown in the fund balance sheet as paying for the services at the Clerk and Recorders Office. It shows up as revenues to the General Fund and is not earmarked for specific uses. REP. SIMPKINS asked why the records aren't mandated to be preserved. Ms. Stoll-Anderson stated most counties do not have the available funds. It has been a lower priority than funding other General Fund activities. HB 813 gives a logical source of funding for preservation.

#### Closing by Sponsor:

REP. O'KEEFE stated preservation should be mandated and HB 813 does that. It gives the counties the responsibility to preserve records and the funds to do it. The funds come from a user fee. People who use the records will pay to have them preserved.

#### HEARING ON SB 100

#### Presentation and Opening Statement by Sponsor:

**SEN. HOCKETT, Senate District 7, Havre,** stated SB 100 will delete the requirements of interlocal agreements to be approved by the Attorney General and makes contract filing at the County Clerk and Recorder's office mandatory.

## Proponents' Testimony:

John Connor, Montana County Attorneys Association, said SB 100 eliminates unnecessary paper work. The law requires that interlocal agreements be reviewed by the Attorney General and approved; then sent back to the originating entities to be filed with the Clerk and Recorder and Secretary of State. This produces unnecessary delays in implementing the agreements. Most of the agreements are between cities and counties, and are examined by City and County Attorneys before they are put into effect. SB 100 removes the requirement that the state get involved in reviewing local government matters.

Mike McGrath, Lewis and Clark County Attorney, stated SB 100 is an attorney's bill. There isn't any need for the Attorney General to approve interlocal agreements. Local governments have there own council and sending the agreements to the AG for approval creates a bottleneck.

James Lofftus, Montana Fire Districts Association, and Linda Stoll-Anderson, Montana Association of Counties, went on record in support of SB 100.

Opponents' Testimony: None

Questions From Committee Members: None

### Closing by Sponsor:

SEN. HOCKETT stated SB 100 will not cost the state any money. It may save the state money by allowing it to do other things.

#### **HEARING ON SB 98**

#### Presentation and Opening Statement by Sponsor:

SEN. JERGESON, Senate District 8, Chinook, said under current law, when there is an audit performed on a local government, the City or County Attorney must send a report to the DOC stating what they will do about any exception to the audits. SB 98 would require that the report from the County or City Attorney would only be sent to the DOC when the DOC feels it is an important enough exception to request that a report be sent. It relieves the City and County Attorneys of paperwork.

#### Proponents' Testimony:

John Connor, Montana County Attorney's Association, stated SB 98 would eliminate paperwork between the county and state local government services division. The statutes require the state to conduct audits of counties, incorporated cities and towns, school, irrigation, conservation, fire and cemetery districts. These audits are prepared and reviewed by the local government entity in conjunction with the auditors. If there are violations

of statute or a nonperformance of duty appearance by the local government officials, the County Attorney notifies the DOC as to what action is to be taken. There is no need for the County Attorney to respond unless there is criminal action.

Mike McGrath, Lewis and Clark County Attorney, stated there is a great deal of paperwork generated by this requirement and he supported SB 98. There is no reason for the County or City Attorneys to be involved unless there is criminal action.

Opponents' Testimony: None

### Questions From Committee Members:

REP. WALLIN asked Mike McGrath why the statute was passed in the first place. There must be a reason. Mr. McGrath stated he did not know. Unless there is a legal problem, there is no reason for the County Attorneys to read the audits. SB 98 provides for the DOC to notify the County or City Attorneys if there is a problem.

## Closing by Sponsor:

SEN. JERGESON stated SB 98 would reduce unnecessary paperwork. Unless something surfaces that requires the County Attorneys attention, there is no reason for them to be involved.

#### **HEARING ON SB 166**

#### Presentation and Opening Statement by Sponsor:

**SEN. JERGESON, Senate District 8, Chinook,** stated SB 166 proposes a system for rewarding local government employees who find ways for local governments to save money. It parallels the state employee incentive award system.

#### Proponents' Testimony:

Linda Stoll-Anderson, Montana Association of Counties, stated the city and county employees have opportunities to come across costsaving ideas. They would like to encourage this and provide an incentive. Payments would come from budget savings. It is not a merit increase.

#### Opponents' Testimony: None

#### Questions From Committee Members:

REP. GOULD asked SEN. JERGESON asked how he planned to implement rules and regulations. SEN. JERGESON stated the governing body would establish an advisory council representative of the employees. REP. GOULD asked if MACo and the Montana League of Cities and Towns could implement a guidebook. SEN. JERGESON said there were representatives of both associations in the audience.

He would be prepared to include in the statute a requirement that the an association representing the local governments put together a handbook. REP. GOULD said he would carry HB 166 for SEN. JERGESON in the house. REP. D. BROWN said SB 166 sets up an appointed advisory council to review the awards.

## Closing by Sponsor:

SEN JERGESON urged support of SB 166.

#### EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 813

Motion: REP. S. J. HANSEN MOVED HB 813 DO PASS.

### Discussion:

REP. SIMPKINS stated there is no requirement for local governments to preserve documents. This is another fee increase. Bart Campbell addressed REP. SIMPKINS'S concerns by saying that on Line 16 through 19 it states that County Commissioners shall establish a preservation fund. The word "shall" requires that it be done.

REP. CROMLEY stated the way the bill is written, he would have to vote against it because the duty of the County Clerk and Recorders is to preserve documents. Section 2 is not needed. REP. S. J. HANSEN spoke in favor of HB 813 and felt it was needed. Smaller counties do not have the money to preserve documents, and it would give them the incentive to do it. REP. McCAFFREE said rural counties have a basement full of necessary records and no money to preserve them. This legislation is necessary.

REP. SIMPKINS stated that this still puts another dollar tax on the people to make them obey a current law. REP. D. BROWN stated the bill could be amended to say the County Clerk and Recorder shall charge five dollars and "may" charge an additional one dollar for the purpose of preservation. REP. SIMPKINS agreed. REP. S. J. HANSEN objected to the amendment. Smaller counties will not want to charge the extra dollar, and they need to do that to preserve the records. REP. D. BROWN asked REP. McCAFFREE if it was a problem if the amendment reads "the Clerk and Recorder must request of the County Commissioners the extra dollar and establishment of the preservation fund". REP. McCAFFREE said no. It would give the counties the option of preserving documents.

Motion: REP. S. J. HANSEN withdrew her Do Pass motion. NO ACTION WAS TAKEN ON HB 813.

#### **HEARING ON SB 25**

### Presentation and Opening Statement by Sponsor:

SEN. WILLIAMS, Senate District 15, Hobson, stated SB 25 would allow the County Treasurers to deposit nontax revenue of \$25 or less in the General Fund. It will save the Treasurers time in distribution of small nontax revenue checks from the state. This must be done by hand since the state deducts the 6 mill university levy before the check is sent to the county. Written testimony was submitted. EXHIBIT 2

## Proponents' Testimony:

Gordon Morris, Montana Association of Counties, supported SB 25. It does not have a fiscal impact statewide.

Opponents' Testimony: None

## Questions From Committee Members:

**REP. SIMPKINS** asked **Gordon Morris** how much money is involved in these small receipts. **Mr. Morris** said a statewide analysis indicates about \$600 per county.

#### Closing by Sponsor:

SEN. WILLIAMS said he was not sure about the fiscal impact. It is difficult to put a dollar amount on the time spent distributing these nontax revenues. The County Commissioners are looking for ways to save money. He would like REP. KNOX or GRINDE to carry the bill if passed.

#### HEARING ON SB 92

### Presentation and Opening Statement by Sponsor:

SEN. BRUSKI, Senate District 12, Great Falls, stated SB 92 would delete the requirements for local governments to report the use of motor fuel tax funds and for the Department of Highways to report monthly construction plans and projects. These are unnecessary reports that take time and effort.

#### Proponents' Testimony:

James Beck, Montana Department of Highways, stated SB 92 would eliminate the submission and storage of two reports; one submitted to DOH and one prepared by DOH. The first report is submitted by 56 counties and 128 cities who receive gas money pursuant to Section 15-70-101. It requires counties and cities to report how they plan to spend the money distributed to them. The reports serve no useful function and take up space in a filing cabinet. The second report is required by statute. It

requires the DOH to report ongoing construction to the Governor. The Governor's office doesn't want the report and the DOH doesn't want to prepare it.

Opponents' Testimony: None

#### Questions From Committee Members:

REP. McCAFFREE stated that on Page 4, Line 13 it shows a limit of \$4,000, and asked James Beck if it is consistent with other county bidding procedures. Mr. Beck stated that they are not dealing with county bidding procedures. They are dealing with Subsection 3 and the requirement that cities and counties provide reports.

#### Closing by Sponsor:

SEN. BRUSKI urged the committee's support.

#### EXECUTIVE ACTION ON SB 92

Motion/Vote: REP. NELSON MOVED SB 92 BE CONCURRED IN AND PLACED ON CONSENT CALENDAR. Motion carried unanimously.

#### EXECUTIVE ACTION ON SB 25

Motion/Vote: REP. WALLIN MOVED SB 25 BE CONCURRED IN AND PLACED ON CONSENT CALENDAR. Motion carried unanimously.

#### EXECUTIVE ACTION ON SB 166

Motion/Vote: REP. GOULD MOVED SB 166 BE CONCURRED IN AND PLACED ON CONSENT CALENDAR. Motion carried unanimously.

#### EXECUTIVE ACTION ON SB 98

Motion/Vote: REP. BROOKE MOVED SB 98 BE CONCURRED IN. Motion carried 17 to 1 with REP. WALLIN voting no.

#### EXECUTIVE ACTION ON SB 100

Motion/Vote: REP. GOULD MOVED SB 100 BE CONCURRED IN AND PLACED ON CONSENT CALENDAR. Motion carried unanimously.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Adjournment: 4:45 p.m.

DIANA WXATT, Chair

LOIS O'CONNOR, Secretary

DW/lo

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

ROLL CALL

DATE 3-5-91

NAME	PRESENT	ABSENT	EXCUSED
Rep. Paula Darko	X		
Rep. Jessica Stickney, Vice-Chair	X		
Rep. Joe Barnett			X
Rep. Arlene Becker	X		
Rep. Vivian Brooke	X		
Rep. Dave Brown	X		
Rep. Brent Cromley	X		
Rep. Tim Dowell			X
Rep. Budd Gould	X		,
Rep. Stella Jean Hansen	X		
Rep. Harriet Hayne	X		
Rep. Ed McCaffree	X		
Rep. Tom Nelson	X		
Rep. Jim Rice			X
Rep. Sheila Rice	X		
Rep. Richard Simpkins	X		
Rep. Norm Wallin	X		
Rep. Diana Wyatt, Chair	X		

## HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT

March 5, 1991 Page 1 of 1

Mr. Speaker: We, the committee on Local Government report that Senate Bill 92 (third reading copy -- blue) be concurred in and be placed on consent calendar .

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#### HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT

March 5, 1991 Page 1 of 1

Mr. Speaker: We, the committee on Local Government report that Senate Bill 25 (third reading copy -- blue) be concurred in and be placed on consent calendar .

## HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT

March 5, 1991 Page 1 of 1

Mr. Speaker: We, the committee on <u>Local Government</u> report that <u>Senate Bill 166</u> (third reading copy -- blue) <u>be concurred in</u> and be placed on consent calendar.

Signed:

471641SC.Hpd

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## HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT

March 5, 1991 Page 1 of 1

Mr. Speaker: We, the committee on <u>Local Government</u> report that <u>Senate Bill 98</u> (third reading copy -- blue) be concurred in .

Signed:

Diana Wyatt, Chairman

Carried by: Rep. A Will

## HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT

March 5, 1991 Page 1 of 1

Mr. Speaker: We, the committee on <u>Local Government</u> report that <u>Senate Bill 100</u> (third reading copy -- blue) <u>be concurred in</u> and be placed on consent calendar.

Signed:

471642SC.Hpd

EXHIBIT	/	
DATE	3-5.91	
HB	813	

DOUGLAS B. OLSON
Attorney
P.O. Box 1695
Helena, Mt. 59624
443-0207

March 5, 1991

House Local Government Committee 52nd Montana Legislature State Capital Helena, Montana 59620

re: HB 813

Dear Madam Chairperson & Committee Members:

My name is Doug Olson, I am an attorney residing in Helena and I am appearing before you today representing myself to encourage you to support House Bill 813. I contacted Representative O'Keefe to request that he sponsor legislation to increase by one dollar (\$1.00) the fees that are charged for filing legal documents with the County Clerk and Recorders' Offices (Section 7-4-2632, MCA). My intent was to create a county records preservation account to be funded by this increase.

Last summer I spent many hours in the Lewis and Clark County Clerk and Recorder's Office researching many old land transaction records in relation to a water project I was working with the City of Helena on. The records in Lewis and Clark County go back as far as 1864, almost 140 years. While some counties in Montana may not have been created 140 years ago, most counties are at close to one hundred years old.

What types of records are maintained by the County Clerk and Recorders? Land grants from the federal government (Patents), mining claims, water rights, deeds, leases, mortgages, mineral rights, as well as birth and death records. Many of these county records are deteriorating at an alarming rate and should be microfilmed with the original record book pages laminated and then stored to protect them.

Don't County Clerk and Recorders currently have the funds to do microfilm their older records or to laminate pages in the record books that are becoming frayed? The answer at this time is basically no. Of the five dollars (\$5.00) that is currently collected for filing deeds, etc., none of these monies are earmarked for maintaining and preserving the records of the County Clerk and Recorders' offices. Some records are being preserved but current funding is inadequate to do what needs to be done. Newly filed documents are microfilmed but there are limited funds to protect our older records.

Letter to House Local Government Committee

re: HB 813 March 5, 1991

Page 2

I'm not an expert at county government finances but from what I've been told all the fees collected for filing documents by the County Clerks and Recorders are deposited in the County General Fund. The County Clerk and Recorders must apply for appropriations from the county commissioners to run their offices. All local governments are strapped for funding as a result of "I-105" and so trying to establish a county records preservation fund out of the existing County General Fund monies is unrealistic even though it is essential that county records be preserved.

Preserving our county records is important not only from the perspective of maintaining our history but also for preserving the legal rights of your constituents that these documents reflect. It is important that counties establish an earmarked account for county records preservation so that the one-dollar increase in recording fees clearly be allocated for the purposes for which it is being established.

A July 1, 1991 effective date is included in HB 813 to coincide with the county government fiscal year that County Clerk and Recorders operate under.

I wish to thank Representative O'Keefe for introducing this bill and I would urge your support of this bill as it makes it way through the legislature. Thank you for your consideration of my testimony and I would welcome any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

Douglas B. Olson

Attorney

CTYRECS. TXT

cc: Lewis & Clark County Commissioners Lewis & Clark County Clerk & Recorder

EXH	HIBIT 2	
MONTANA COUNTY TREASURERS ASSOCIATION	3-5-91	
HR.	SB 25	

## TESTIMONY SB 25

At the request of the Senate Local Government Committee, several County Treasurers were contacted to determine the fiscal impact of SB 25 and to clarify the types of revenues that would be affected by the bill.

## Counties surveyed

The counties surveyed include: Toole, Fergus, Cascade, Yellowstone, Lake and Mineral.

## Fiscal Impact

It is estimated that the annual state-wide revenue affected by SB 25 would be between \$30,000 and \$40,000. The estimate is based on the estimates received from the surveyed counties which varied from a low of \$100 per year in Mineral County to Yellowstone and Cascade counties which estimated less than \$1,000 per year. Fergus and Toole estimated \$500 per year and Lake estimated \$300 - \$400 per year. (\$600 per year  $\times$  56 counties = \$33,600)

## Revenue affected

Representitive examples of non tax revenue affected by this bill including:

- corporate license tax. Typically these payments are in the thousands of dollars. It is unusual for one to be less than \$25.
  - custom combine fee. Typically these fees exceed \$25.
  - -copying charges
  - fax fees
  - -bad check fees
- -fees for searching the treasurers records (these are typically paid by mortgage companies in smaller counties)

## Cost savings

In the example of the corporate license tax used at the hearing, the County Treasurer was required to spread the tax manually to a number of taxing entities. This bill would save the time required to do that manual work. Many of the fees such as the bad check charge, fax fee, copying charges, etc., can be spread by the computer. However, each of those receipts requires the preparation of a journal voucher (JV) for each fund into which that money is distributed. The JV serves as the source document to support the computer entry. The time required to prepare the JVs is the same for a \$10 receipt as it is for a \$10,000 receipt. The elimination of the requirement to prepare the JVs for this type of revenue would be a time saver for the treasurer and would not have a material impact on the revenue of any fund.

The majority of the non-tax revenue affected by this bill is related to a service provided by the treasurer. i.e. fax charges, bad check fees, copy fees. The county general fund is the most expedient place to deposit this money.

If the committee amended the bill to give this revenue schools the treasurer would need guidance in splitting the revenue amoung the different school districts in the county. The amount of money lost by any entity would not be material and the purpose of the bill to eliminate unnecessary work would be defeated if the money were given to schools.

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P. 0. BOX 8169; MISSOULA, MT 59807

TAX PERIOD: JUNE 30, 1989
80% OF \$54.00 (TAX PAID) X 5.42% (RATIO OF DEPOSITS) =
\$2.34

AGENCY 5801 DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE 406-444-3447 9026729 PAYEE 810207590

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PLEASE LEAVE PREPARED TESTIMONY WITH SECRETARY. WITNESS STATEMENT FORMS ARE AVAILABLE IF YOU CARE TO SUBMIT WRITTEN TESTIMONY.

9 1	sponsor(s) Committee	bill no. <u>SB 98</u>
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NAME AND ADDRESS	REPRESENTING	SUPPORT	OPPOSE
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John Connot	MT County Altys ASSA	<u></u>	
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