

MINUTES

MONTANA SENATE 53rd LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Call to Order: By Senator Fritz, V.C., on February 3, 1993, at 1:17 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Sen. Chet Blaylock, Chair (D)
Sen. Harry Fritz, Vice Chair (D)
Sen. Bob Brown (R)
Sen. John Hertel (R)
Sen. Dennis Nathe (R)
Sen. Spook Stang (D)
Sen. Daryl Toews (R)
Sen. Mignon Waterman (D)
Sen. Bill Wilson (D)
Sen. Bill Yellowtail (D)

Members Excused: Sen. Bill Yellowtail

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Eddye McClure, Legislative Council
Sylvia Kinsey, Committee Secretary

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

Committee Business Summary:

Hearing: SB 293
HB 224

Executive Action: HB 224

HEARING ON HOUSE BILL 224

Opening Statement by Sponsor:

Representative Dore Schwinden, House District 20, Wolf Point, said this bill was requested by the School Boards Association (MSBA), which stemmed from an incident in Roosevelt County. The bill provides for the submission of resignations of school trustees to the clerk of the local district, page 2 sub F of the bill. Previously these resignations were filed in the Secretary of State's office, see page 2, sub G.

Proponents' Testimony:

Bruce Moerer, MSBA, said this is a bill that came through our Association. He said they do get calls saying "we have a resignation of a trustee, what do we do with it", and when you look at the statute there is confusion there at best. He said it does not make sense to send that resignation to the Secretary of State's office and a lot of people ignore it. He said it makes sense to clear up the confusion and let the resignation be submitted to the local clerk.

Opponents' Testimony:

None.

Informational Testimony:

None.

Questions From Committee Members and Responses:

None.

Closing by Sponsor:

Representative Schwinden thanked the members for a good hearing on HB 224. He said the bill did pass through the House committee unanimously and was unopposed on the floor. He said he did not have anyone specifically in mind to carry the bill on the Senate floor.

Senator Brown assumed the Chair for the hearing on SB 293.

HEARING ON SENATE BILL 293

Opening Statement by Sponsor:

Senator Harry Fritz, Senate District 28, Missoula, said he believed SB 293 had gone out under some false premises. Everybody he had talked to thinks it is a bill which mandates consolidation, and it is not. This bill does mandate that elementary school districts within a high school district, form a joint board to talk about common matters. He pointed out that is all this bill does. He said there is a list of things the board can talk about and act upon. It does not stipulate that minority votes will be compelled to do anything in this bill. It has a representation procedure which is already in current law for joint boards which have been put together before this bill will go into effect. He stressed this is not a consolidation bill and on the flip side of the coin, this is a way of avoiding school consolidation and simultaneously solving some common problems. If a school consolidation bill does come down, this bill is one way of diverting it. We can argue that we do have a joint board of trustees, we are talking about common problems, and we are coming up with some reasonable solutions. He pointed out there was no need for consolidation with this bill.

Proponents' Testimony:

Dori Nielson, Office of Public Instruction (OPI), said the OPI supports this bill, recognizing the serious concerns that roll around any kind of restructuring at this point. She said anything that begins with "C" really does cause concern in the field, and the responses on both sides of this issue are emotional, people are extremely disturbed by it and the office is well aware of that. Consolidation does not seem to be a viable option in Montana, and it may not be a reasonable one. She said it may not be something that would solve any of the ills that some people think it may solve. She was aware of the benefits of a small school and she had graduated from a high school of 40. This bill could waylay the calls for consolidation. It does not force consolidation, but it does require cooperation and uses current structures we have now and they are aware that the best things they have seen happen in education are some of the efforts that are exerted when districts come together in some sort of discussion and planning. She said this bill would ensure that those who have not come together would do so and would not be dependent on the personalities of some local leaders. The discussion of the joint board will be for purposes they define and if nothing is happening they will not have discussions. Their district structure will remain in place, but under this bill an elementary and a high school district will be placed in a position to do business together, and she pointed out some of the problems they might be able to discuss and deal with. She said these are stressful times, both financially and personally and they do not think consolidation is the answer. They do believe cooperation is a partial answer and this bill is an attempt to have that cooperation.

Opponents' Testimony:

Don Waldron, Montana Rural Education Association (MREA), said he did not believe the sponsor of this bill meant this as a consolidation bill when it started. His testimony is attached to the minutes. (exhibit 1)

Gwyn Andersen, Teton County Superintendent of Schools, Choteau, gave written testimony. (exhibit 2)

Larry Stollfuss, Choteau County Superintendent of Schools said in 1987 when HB 682 was passed, it allowed for the formation of joint boards. He said the bill did not make it mandatory, but allowed schools to get together because they wanted to do so. He said they did it, it worked, and the reason it worked was because it is not mandatory. He gave some history on the two joint boards they formed, one on Hazardous Materials and one for Special Education purposes. He said this piece of legislation would change the way it is working well for them now.

Frank McGowan, Superintendent, Principal of Jr. High and Elementary of Vaughn public schools, district 74 said they have

the students of Vaughn, and are one of the largest rural elementary schools in Montana with a large group of special ed and chapter children--about 70 out of 200. His testimony is attached. (exhibit 3)

Cindy Brattain, Educator at the Vaughn School, said she did not believe in forcing consolidation, and even though this bill does not speak per se the word consolidation, she felt it threatened an elementary school district that did not abide by it because they will lose money, and she believed that was being forced. She believed on this kind of an issue, that the parents should speak through their vote.

Joey Horne, a seventh grader in the Vaughn School said the previous speakers had stolen his facts, but he would speak about the kids in the school. He said his school had more spirit, did more things together and stayed together without infighting. He also mentioned this bill could be responsible for taking a lot of kids out of sports because only the ones who were good at sports would stay, the remainder would not be in sports and would lose by it. He also pointed out that a small school gave more individualized attention to the students.

Crystal Langford, Vaughn Public Schools and an eighth grader, said she cared about what happens to her fellow students. A year ago she came from a school with between 900 and 1,000 kids, but found she liked it better at Vaughn where the students and teachers were friendly and she could feel she belonged. In her old school the teachers didn't seem to care about what they taught or if the students cared about what they learned. Because of the teacher attitude, the students did not care, and at Vaughn the teachers care about their students education and those who need extra help, get it. She said there is much less fighting in the school because if they can keep the students interested in what they are learning, it can result in them having better attitudes toward each other and can also help students clean up their acts with drugs and alcohol.

Brenda Shirley, teacher and coach at Vaughn, said she felt under this bill, which looks like consolidation, a school would lose it's identity. She said along with education, extra curricular activities are very important to our community and in Vaughn, the community centers around their school. She said the number of team members in sports will not change, but there will be more students to pick from and many will lose out. The transportation to and from activities will increase and most likely would limit the chance for students to participate as well as be an increased financial burden on the parents.

Gabe Welcher, Vaughn School student said he did not like consolidation. The teachers are very responsive to the student and this school means a lot to the people who used to go to this school when they were young. He said if they did not have the Vaughn school the students would have to travel back and forth

along the highway to get to school, and said this bill should not be passed so kids could still have the school they belong to.

Craig Brewington, Superintendent of Schools, Hellgate Elementary School, Missoula, and has talked to Dori Nielsen from OPI about this bill and he did not believe it was intended to be a consolidation bill, however "the net effect of this bill as it is written, if it is not a consolidation bill, is the 'tar baby' of consolidation bills". The requirements of the bill is that every elementary district will form a joint board with the high school district and the penalty if not complied with by 1994 or 1995, you either cease to exist or lose all of your state funding for '95-'96. There is no penalty involved for the high school district and if they wanted to be an empire builder they would simply stick the elementary districts on the joint board until '95-'96, when they either go broke or have to consolidate. He pointed out if the high school board refuses to participate, the elementary boards will die, financially bankrupt or be forced to consolidate. He said "That's the one end of the 'tar baby', the other end of the 'tar baby' is you can't get out of it, if you do, you cease to exist." He told of a consortium they have in Missoula where they have to look at their losses. If they were part of a joint board and this were the subject matter of the joint board, they couldn't get out of it. He mentioned the construction of the joint board and said he did not like it. He also pointed out that these things could be handled through the County Superintendent of Schools, and a joint board of this kind was not needed.

Ronald Stegmann, Superintendent of Schools, East Helena, said he did not have prepared testimony since he had only heard about the hearing this morning. From reading the bill and listening to the testimony Dori Nielson gave, he could see nothing to be gained by the bill. He said he would prepare testimony and see that every member of this committee received it.

Jann Massie, Educator, Golden Ridge School handed out testimony. (exhibit 4) and said she would speak from her heart.

Camile Coughlin, Helmville School # 15, said that they have been told this is not a consolidation bill, but she would tell the committee of their situation. She said they have three trustees on their school board and their high school children go 30 miles on a dirt road to the highschool which is in a different county where we live and pay taxes. She was concerned because they have no elected member of the board where their high school children go to school. She was concerned about being any school board member representing them on the high school board since their children go to school in a different county, and she did not see any chance of fair representation from their area.

Jack Hayne Dupuyer said he had been commissioned by the school board and the community to voice their opposition to Senate Bill 293. They do not want to lose control of their local schools and

over 50% of the salutatorians and valedictorians of the Valier Highschool for the past 40 years have been Dupuyer grade school products, and they do not want to lose their school.

Martha Kennedy, Clerk at the Ulm School, said she had a letter signed by the children in the school. (exhibits 5 and 6) She said 1/4 of their student body live about half way between Cascade and Great Falls, and about 1/4 of their student body is populated by Great Falls District and parents transport these kids to come to our district because of quality education and teacher ratio. She said this bill reads consolidation to her and she opposed it.

Bob Anderson, School Boards Association, said the Association is opposed to this bill. They do not believe it is an automatic consolidation, but believe it to be a top-down approach.

Loren Frazier, School Administrators, School Administrators, said there seems to be a lot of confusion over the bill, although he felt the bill in it's conception had great intent. It does not read that way now, and one of his big concerns is that it looks like there will be some boards developed that are almost unworkable in size.

Lynda Brannon, Montana Association of School Business Officials, said the Association wants to be on record as opposing this bill and mandating such an action as this. In one part of the bill it says trustees "may" get together and do this nice little venture, and yet in the paragraph prior to this it states that if you don't we are going to choke you financially. Because of the tone of the bill and because of cutting off the dollars if the districts do not go along with this as well as the fact that this procedure is already allowed by law, they oppose it. She also pointed out there is a section of law being repealed in the bill that does not exist.

Annette Cade, representing herself and her children, and the Montana City School which is sort of in limbo between two high school districts said they would be hard pressed to know which they wanted to be in. They are opposed to consolidation, have an excellent school, and the excellence exists because they are a small integrated district with lots of personal interest. Many of the people that are involved in our school would not drive 65 miles to go to a board meeting in another area to be heard.

Tina Hlad, Ulm School District, said this bill for them would achieve nothing. Currently they are working with the Cascade school where they share counselors, band teachers, etc. This bill would only hinder us from providing a quality education for our children.

Scott Hayne, Board Member Golden Ridge School District, Teton County said he concurred with what had been said by the opponents and commented that as a Board member he had tried to imagine

being on this large board. If their district only had the one vote, they would be involved with the Fairfield High School Board and did not feel they would come out and fix something such as a plumbing problem which the board members are now doing to save money for the school. If there were faculty problems the board would suggest it was too much hassle to go to the school to settle it, but would suggest bussing students to Fairfield. He would be voted down in board meetings, and said the community would like to decide their own fate.

Dan Hofer, Trustee Auchard Creek School District 27, said they oppose this bill and would like to keep their own school.

Lowell Knowlen, said he had worked with several colonies in the county working on different school issues. The colonies he has dealt with and all the districts he has talked to in the past about the possibility of bills like this have all opposed it. The reality is that this bill does not accomplish anything that is good, it takes away local control, it is not going to save any tax dollars in the end since you will have to pay higher salaries to teachers in the merge.

James Stone, Ovando School Board, said they are opposed to this bill. They have a unique situation with such a small school in all the individual attention given to all the students. With a small school it brings the individual families together to work together and with their kids.

Jacob Walter, Spring Creek Colony, Lewistown, said they oppose the bill because once they take our trustees away, they are running our schools, and we want to keep their local control.

Mrs. Paul Walter, Spring Creek Colony School, Lewistown, said they oppose the bill. She has been doing Clerk work for ten years. The simple question she had is that if kids are supposed to be our first priority, why are they dealt with this way.

Elias Wipf, New Rockport Colony, said they feel there are too many loose ends in this bill that have not been mentioned but should be clarified. They oppose the bill and feel it would be a detriment to their school.

Gayle Crane, Arlee School District 28 said she was concerned about consolidation from the standpoint of schools that are eligible for impact aid money. When schools consolidate and become a new district, people should be aware that becoming a new district in terms of federal impact aid will prevent eligibility for funding for one year.

Ray Scott, Greenfield, said the schools are working the way they are at the present time. He can not understand how this bill would work, and as long as the present system is working, why not just leave it alone.

James Gallo, Trustee from School District 14 in Helmville and believed from the response the committee has received that the basic facts have shown how people feel. He believed it irritated many people here that they received notice of this hearing less than 24 hours ago. He did not feel the hearing was an effort to work with the people and the kids in this school, there should not be this kind of "scam". He was very upset and believed there was some sort of conspiracy in keeping people from finding out about the hearing. He felt if there was a three day time period, it should be a three day time period for him to look at it. He said they do care and will do everything they can to hold the small schools together because their children are getting a quality education at a cheap cost. He said they are running a school on \$72,000 a year and sending kids to college on it.

Rick Sullivan, Deer Creek School, District 15, said they strongly oppose this bill.

Informational Testimony:

None.

Questions From Committee Members and Responses:

Acting Chair Brown reminded those present that SB 293 is before the committee at the request of the OPI. There seems to be some difference of opinion as to what this bill is purported to do, we might be able to answer quite a few questions if we have a person from the OPI respond in the general way to some of the comments that have been made. He asked Ms. Nielsen to respond.

Ms. Nielson said in the position she is in at OPI, she hears a lot about consolidation bills and a lot of people ask her to craft something. Testimony today was given to bills that people are or have crafted or have talked about, but they are not this bill. This is not the county consolidation bill she had heard some testimony about, this is asking you to retain your structure as it is and have a representative that sits on a board that might discuss the issue. You must be part of the board, you may decide what you talk about, you may choose what you are sharing or not sharing, you may choose one of the things that are listed for some kind of coordinated discussion, and she heard many districts are working together as well as many who are not. She pointed out that some of the districts that are working together are here and are testifying to the effectiveness of working together. This bill is saying there are people who are not working together and there are people who at least ought to have a structure in place that says here is something that lets you sit together and talk about issues. There are some complications about trying to structure a board from some of the statutes that already exist which can be very difficult. Most of this is crafted from statutes that already exist but she urged people to read the bill and said some of the difficulties need to be worked on. The intent of the bill is not to have you lose your small

schools and she believed something like this bill might waylay some of that removing of small schools.

Acting Chair Brown said a number of people heard about this bill on short notice, and he was curious to know who contacted you. One person said she had heard it yesterday at Western Administrators meeting in Missoula and one said her county superintendent notified them this morning. Mr. Waldron said he would take part of the blame because he had called about 46 of their elementary schools out of the 60 schools the MREA represents, and in turn they notified the County Superintendents and the President of the County Superintendents Association, and told them about this bill. They had an early draft copy of the bill which they shared with their people. He asked them to read the draft copy and they then called their neighbors. Only four or five of those he called could come for the hearing but they told him they would be calling you.

Acting Chair Brown asked Mr. Waldron if, when he contacted these folks, they had a copy of the LC draft and Mr. Waldron said their members had a copy from the December 20 mailing.

Acting Chair Brown asked if he had told them what the bill contained in his opinion and Mr. Waldron said he told them which parts of the bill to look at.

Senator Waterman said she needed a clarification and asked Ms. Nielson if this eliminated the elementary board. Isn't this simply another group that comes together that can choose to talk about these issues. She said testimony said the districts would be forced into consolidation and have their schools closed. She asked if they would retain their elementary boards, but they come together on a K-12 board to discuss some of the things listed. Ms. Nielson said they retain their funding, and does not impact the local districts.

Senator Stang said they can choose to be on the board, but if they don't, they lose their funding. Ms. Nielson said this is a structure where the joint board exists, it doesn't mean they are all doing the same thing, the issues they choose to talk about are going to be common issues. There is a plan about what they talk about. There are two levels, one is the board's existence and the fact that there is a structure, that exists and that is the thing they don't withdraw from. The plans they develop and the things they work on are the things they decide and that they work on, not what someone else lays on them.

Senator Stang said it still goes back to the fact that if the board decides they are going to talk about special ed and if the board makes a decision about special ed, wouldn't that be binding on all of the elementary boards. Ms. Nielson said that is what the joint boards have in place now, it says they will act as to whatever their plan is. They decide how they are working together.

Senator Stang said, if that joint board decides, and because the elementary board has one vote or no votes and the high school members decide they are going to do this and the person goes back to the elementary district and says the high school district says we are going to do this to the elementary board which has no vote, would they be mandated to follow that decision. Ms. Nielson said it would be the joint board that is making the decision and that is what they are doing right now.

Senator Stang said his question is, if that elementary district has no vote or just one vote on the joint board, which is possible by the way these rules are written up, they are outnumbered by the highschool district which they undoubtedly will always be, if they are mandated to act upon the decision of the joint board, it takes the control away from the local district. Ms. Nielson said that could happen, she did not know how some of those boards might be set up. It is a decision for that board to make to determine how they are going to operate. They could determine that if seven people vote to do something those seven people do it and the remainder do not. That is not mandated in the bill.

Acting Chair Brown asked Denise Schenk, Golden Ridge School District, what question she would like to ask and she said she has been hearing the intent of the bill is one thing but the intent is not the same as the effect. In her case students would go into the town of Fairfield where they have seven school board members and they would only have one. If the seven said they had decided in the best interest to close your little school district and vote with the result a seven to one decision. The intent was not to close the school, but is that what the effect will be. Ms. Nielson said she did not believe they had that authority. She said there is a list of authority in the bill and if there are other protections that need to be built into the bill, they should be there and that authority should not be in the bill.

Senator Stang said if the joint board formed and their discussion was consolidation, there was a lone district and the joint board said they want to consolidate. Even though the elementary people did not want that and it was the only vote they had, the possibility does exist and could happen if that was the purpose of the joint board. Ms. Nielson said a joint board would have to agree when they sat down on the purpose and if they do not all agree it would not be binding.

Senator Waterman asked if there aren't separate laws on consolidation. She asked if this would supersede the laws on consolidation. Ms. Nielson said the laws on consolidation still says if the elementary board decided to consolidate they would have to vote, etc.

Annette Cade, Montana City, said she read the provision that says the joint boards may coordinate only those programs and services agreed to by the participating boards that are assembled. She

asked why we are trying to legislate something that can be accomplished in another manner. There are many interlocal agreements and she felt there should be a way OPI could lead the way and let them know someone else had the same problem and suggest they get together and talk about it. She felt it could be done without forming a board and taking legislative action. She did not feel it was necessary to "go around the barn" to handle a problem that most schools will be able to handle themselves. She asked how prevalent it is that boards do not work together. Ms. Nielson said she believed the people who are here may be on boards that work together. She believed it was dependent upon personalities, and knew there were plans for consolidation. This would be a plan to work together, it is a plan that ties the elementary to the highschool and is probably an interim step. It cannot force you to talk together, but is one step from winging it from one week to the next or one year to the next and saying, at least you have a structure where you can sit down and talk. She said it is possible you may say you have nothing to discuss this year and in another area you may have people that say they all have problems trying to do assessment of curricula and don't know what to do while another district might say it is not our issue. She said the OPI does not have much contact with boards as to who is struggling with which issue.

Closing by Sponsor:

Senator Fritz apologized to the opponents for the short notice, technically this bill met the requirements of the notice between posting and hearing, but practically it did not give much time for opponents to learn about the bill and make their way to Helena. He assured the people there was no attempt to "pull the wool" over anybody's eyes. He pointed out there is also other opportunities for involvement if this bill were to proceed. He introduced this bill as a way to avoid consolidation and realized it did not look like that because the bill does mandate a joint board. He said he had been to many of the schools that were represented here today and has visited all of the communities in Montana and is a strong supporter of local schools, he said he is not a consolidationist. This is one way to avoid mandated consolidation and the bill is offered in good faith as a way to bring members of different school boards together to talk about common problems. The OPI knows there is money out there to be saved and he was impressed by the testimony today of the benefits of voluntary cooperation. This bill is an attempt to bring the merits of voluntary cooperation to people who are less enlightened than you are and need to be brought together at the table. If there are other protections we can write into this bill for the existence of local schools, their boards and their jurisdictions, we would be happy to entertain those suggestions.

(Exhibits 7, 8 and 9) were given to the secretary and are attached to the minutes.

Senator Fritz resumed the chair and suggested executive action on some bills.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HOUSE BILL 224

Motion/Vote: Senator Hertel moved House Bill 224 BE CONCURRED IN. Motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY with Senators Blaylock and Yellowtail absent.

Senator Waterman will carry the bill.

Discussion:

House Bill 141 sponsored by Representative Wilbur Spring was discussed. Chair Fritz said this could take care of the concern about not being able to vote for a high school trustee.

Senator Waterman said she was concerned about this bill and what would happen in the Wolf Creek district in regard to Helena. She asked if the OPI could discuss this issue, and asked if this would entitle Wolf Creek to a trustee on the Helena board regardless to what the taxable valuation is, and does it affect the numbers on the board or shift the numbers.

Mr. Jack Copps, OPI, said it would not impact the present situation in the Helena area. The way it is set up at this point is that the East Helena Elementary District has an additional trustee which serves on the high school board. The Kessler elementary and Wolf Creek elementary together have one additional trustee and those two districts have the opportunity to vote for that one additional trustee. This piece of legislation would only impact those districts who qualify for non-voting members at this point. According to the existing law, you cannot have a non-voting trustee and a voting additional trustee. The only way you can have a non-voting trustee is if you do not qualify for any additional voting trustee. This would only apply to the very small rural elementary districts who do not have the taxable valuation to meet that .5 quotient for per trustee valuation. This legislation says in those cases, as those very small districts have no vote at all in determining who the highschool trustees will be, they will be assured that vote because they will have at least one additional trustee.

Senator Waterman asked why, in the case of Wolf Creek, were they combined with Kessler and in Representative Spring's situation were they not combined with another elementary to have one vote as the Wolf Creek-Kessler combination did. Mr. Copps said in that particular case in the Belgrade School District, there are two outlying elementary districts. One is Spring Hill and one is Pass Creek and those two districts combined do not have that .5 quotient, they have a .479 quotient, which means they fall under the quotient to give them the additional voting trustee and qualify only for a non-voting trustee.

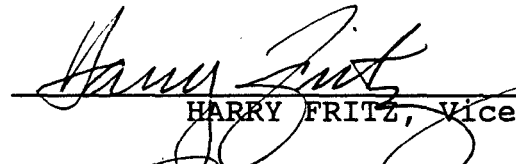
Senator Waterman asked how many of these districts are there and Mr. Copps said he did not know, and could speculate that there

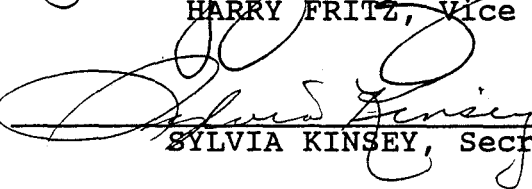
might be 25 or 30 districts out there that may have this kind of situation.

Senator Nathe said he had missed the hearing this year, but two years ago the bill came in and a compromise was struck. This was the compromise that was struck and now we are coming back to undo the compromise of two years ago. Senator Waterman answered yes, and said that was what Representative Spring had indicated also.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 3:40 p.m.


HARRY FRITZ, Vice Chair


SYLVIA KINSEY, Secretary

HF/sk

ROLL CALL

SENATE COMMITTEE

EDUCATION

DATE _____

2/3/93

[illegible]

FC8

Attach to each day's minutes

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT

Page 1 of 1
February 3, 1993

MR. PRESIDENT:

We, your committee on Education and Cultural Resources having had under consideration House Bill 224 (first reading copy -- white), respectfully report that House Bill 224 be concurred in.

Signed: *H. Felt* VICE-CH.
Senator Chet Blaylock, Chair

AM Amd. Coord.
Sec. of Senate

Waterman
Senator Carrying Bill

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SENATE EDUCATION
EXHIBIT NO. 1

DATE 2/3/93

S BILL NO. 293

HEARING ON SENATE BILL 293

Senate Education
January 3, 1993 - 1:00 P.M.

We are opposed to Senate Bill 293 because it looks, walks and smells like a consolidation bill down the road without a vote of the districts' patrons. The intent may have been worthy, but the result may also be disastrous.

In Senator Fritz's home county the county high school and the surrounding elementary schools have for years met as a coordinating committee to solve problems. Just in the last couple of years they have been talking about hiring a program planner coordinator in which they all would share the cost. We think this voluntary coming together is much better than using a law to force a system.

Section (1) is a forced consolidation issue - from there on in Section (2) it sounds as if they may do these things.

We will end up with another board of trustees that will in time take over the old elementary and high school boards.

Page 4, line 7, (a) All the members of the board of the largest elementary district within the boundaries of the high school district are voting members of the new board. In addition, small schools can elect members as per their ANB ratio to the large district.

This joint board has the power to employ a superintendent and personnel including teachers and specialists. In other words, they can have full rights to form a total school district operation. Where would this leave the small districts?

Lustre Elementary would be a small part of Frazer School. Hellgate Elementary's 1,000 students would be a small part of Greater Missoula Schools as well as Clinton, Bonner, Lolo, Target Range, Desmet and other small elementaries.

I know you don't like to hear the words Local Control, but the bill would make local control a thing of the past.

Is this bill supposed to save money and increase the quality of education or is it to simplify OPI's work ¹⁶and only have 164 reports in place of 500? As far as cost savings, I see none. In fact, I see additional costs to operate another board and then hire the needed help. By 1999 maybe some schools would consolidate and appear to save money.

In 1985 and 1987 I made a study of Missoula elementaries as to what could be saved by consolidating six elementary schools. I found that we could close five districts and all join the one remaining saving \$480,000 in superintendent office costs. Taking the per student cost we found it would cost over \$1,000,000 to consolidate and some of those superintendents would need to be rehired as principals. The next cost was way over \$1,000,000.

Just this year Missoula County High School and Missoula elementaries looked at combining and the \$200,000 that might be saved was offset with over \$1,000,000 to just move all staff to the high school's high salary schedules. No, I don't think cost savings is what would be accomplished by this bill.

Smaller schools and more school board members usually bring the parents closer to their schools and that brings better support and understanding of what schools are trying to accomplish.

No, I don't think West Valley, a fine school in the Flathead area, wants Kalispell schools telling them how to run their school. The same goes for Somers and the many other schools in the Flathead Valley.

I realize this bill is designed to give local schools the choice of varying levels of participation. Now how long before some state agency or legislature would change that option?

Large districts should have a right to vote if they want small districts and small districts the right to vote if they want to give up their school. This well intended bill is not what Montana schools want or need. I urge you to stop Senate Bill 293 here in this committee today.

If I may Mr. Chairman, I would like to file a complaint on the timing of this hearing. The bill appeared on the status sheet Tuesday morning and on Tuesday morning's Senate hearing schedule. That is about 30 hours' notice - not the three legislative days as outlined in your Senate Rules. (S-30-90)

We did not call and ask for postponement since it would not put us in a good light. We only ask that in the future hearing notices be delayed so we can get out notice to our people.

Thank you for any future consideration you can give us on these notices.

Don Waldron, Lobbyist
Montana Rural Education Association

County school chief speaks out against combining districts

By GARY JAHRIG
of the Missoulian

Missoula County's top elected school official does not believe consolidating school districts is the answer to Montana's educational funding woes.

"There is no quick fix to the school-funding problems," said Rachel Vielleux, Missoula County's superintendent of schools. "To assume that cutting administrators and the number of school districts is going to fix things is ludicrous."

Vielleux said she believes consolidation will be a prime topic of discussion when the Legislature convenes in January. A recent Missoulian survey of state lawmakers confirmed that many view consolidation as a way to save money.

But Vielleux, who has put out a pamphlet titled "An Explanation of School Funding for Over-Worked Legislators," said in areas

such as Missoula County, school district consolidation likely would end up costing more money.

"Some people are firmly convinced it will save money," she said. "But unless it closes buildings, it won't save money."

Vielleux said if Missoula County was to consolidate its 14 school districts, all of the school buildings — with the possible exception of tiny Sunset School near Greenough — would still need to be used to handle the number of students in the Missoula area.

It also would be costly for small districts to consolidate with larger districts because teacher salaries would have to be upgraded, Vielleux said. Most of the smaller districts in Missoula County do not have the same salary scale as large districts, such as Missoula County High Schools or School

(See DISTRICTS, Page A-6)

Districts

(continued)

District 1.

For example, Hellgate Elementary Superintendent Craig Brewington said it would cost about \$171,000 per year to upgrade the salaries of 63 teachers in his district to the level paid by MCHS. If Hellgate were to merge with District 1, Brewington said it would cost about \$100,000.

"Somebody would have to pay for this," said Brewington, who believes his district would be better off left alone.

Both Vielleux and Brewington said that many legislators are operating under the misconception that Montana has about 540 school districts. She said the state actually only has about 365 separate units, because many districts, such as Frenchtown elementary

and high school, are counted separately for budgeting purposes.

As for administrative numbers, Vielleux said those also tend to be overinflated because many superintendents in small districts, such as Clinton, also serve as their school's principal.

Vielleux said that consolidation may be effective in rural areas of central and eastern Montana, where the marriage of school districts would not create one huge district. But in Missoula County, the creation of one "super district" would create a bureaucratic nightmare where students and individual schools run the risk of getting "lost in the shuffle," she said.

"I know they are in a desperation situation as far as money goes," Vielleux said. "But I hope (legislators) put the onus on educators and trustees to work on it for a year before forcing consolidation on everyone."

School districts consider merger

By GARY JAHRIG
of the Missoulian

Trustees from Missoula County's two largest school districts will meet Thursday to discuss the possibility of merging.

"It's an opportunity to get together to talk about the whole matter and talk about how to proceed," said School District 1 Superintendent Jake Block.

Block said board members will talk about the pros and cons of unifying the 6,100-student District 1 with the 3,500-student Missoula County High Schools District. Block said he personally favors uniting the two districts.

"I think it would be the best direction for the two school districts," said Block, who worked as assistant superintendent of the K-12 district in Great Falls before coming to Missoula. "My experience in a unified district is that it creates greater responsiveness within the system."

Karen Ward, the MCHS Board chairwoman, said she believes one large school district in Missoula would help coordinate the curriculum from elementary through high school.

"I'm personally strongly in favor of unifying with District 1," Ward said. "Right now we rely on cooperation, but under unification we'd be certain the curriculum was coordinated."

Ward said she has also invited representatives from the smaller school districts in Missoula County, such as Hellgate Elementary, Target Range and Lolo, to attend the Thursday meeting because their students go on to attend MCHS.

Mike Kupilik, the District 1 Board chairman, said he too believes unification would help coordinate curriculum. While unification would cut down on duplication of some services, Kupilik said it is wrong to believe that all administrative services would be cut in half.

"A lot of people say if we go together we can fire half the people," Kupilik said. "That's not really true because we can't just double everyone's work load."

Kupilik also said it could cost up to an additional \$1 million per year to put teachers from both districts on the same salary sched-

—Missoulian, Tuesday, January 5, 1993

Merger

(continued)

"Unless the state gives us some ability to increase our budget for unification, it won't work," Kupilik said. "I really don't think that if the money problems are not resolved, it would even be worth putting it to a vote."

Ward said the new district could phase in any salary changes over a period of time to spread out that cost of unification.

Talk of unifying Missoula's two largest school districts has

surfaced off and on over the past 25 years. Voters defeated the proposal twice during a five-month span in 1970. Several attempts to force school districts to unite have also been defeated at the state Legislature, but several lawmakers have indicated they will try again during the session that began Monday.

In order for MCHS and District 1 to unify, the change would have to be approved by both school boards and a majority of voters in each district. If successful, Block said state law would require the MCHS Board to disband. The District 1 Board would then be increased from seven to 11 members, Block said.

Some local school observers believe the timing for unification in Missoula is right because of the recent resignation of MCHS Superintendent Dennis Kraft, who will leave his post at the end of June. Block said Monday that he is interested in becoming superintendent of the new district.

"I've made no secret in other districts where I've sought superintendent's jobs that that was one of my goals," Block said. "But the matter of my support for unification is not contingent on my being superintendent of the unified district."

The meeting Thursday will begin at 4 p.m. in the School District 1 Administration Building at 215 S. Sixth St. W.

Senate Education

Exhibit #1

2-3-93
SB-293

MONTANA RURAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

P.O. BOX 5418

HELENA, MONTANA 59604

(406) 442-8813

FAX (406) 442-8839

February 4, 1993

Senator Bob Brown
Acting Chairman
Senate Education Committee
State Capitol, Room 402
Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Senator Brown:

First off I want to apologize for all the people showing up that I did not expect. If I thought we would have had over 25 present, I would have called ahead to alert you.

Your Committee was very cooperative with the large crowd and all of you went beyond call to make them feel at ease. Your control was very appropriate for the circumstances. Thanks to all of you for that courtesy. Chairman Blaylock should give you all a gold star when he returns.

Vaughn School is not one of our members so I had no idea they were coming. They did a nice job and it was refreshing to have the students present. I'm pleased with the response we got from the public and very appreciative of how you handled the mob.

Sincerely,

Don Waldron

Don Waldron
Lobbyist

Senate Ed File copy

SENATE EDUCATION

EXHIBIT NO. 2

DATE 2/3/93

BILL NO. 293

TO: SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

FROM: GWYN M. ANDERSEN, TETON COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

RE: SENATE BILL 293

DATE: FEBRUARY 3, 1993

When you call the legislative hot line this bill is described as "allowing an elementary school district to join with a high school district for program and administrative purposes". Section 1, number 3 of Senate Bill 293 states that independent elementary schools who do not form a joint board prior to school year 1995-96 will become ineligible for state equalization funding, language which does not speak to allowances.

Section 2, number 7, sums it up rather well. The joint boards formed through this legislation will be dissolved only when a member district ceases to exist...

To the independent elementary schools that will be affected by this bill it is in fact forced K-12 consolidation.

It has been my experience that when you force people to do something they don't want to do the end result is usually less than desirable. Forcing urban and rural boards together for a purpose on which they do not agree, will only promote hostility between rural and urban communities. It could in fact split communities as well as families.

There are already mechanisms in the law to allow districts to "join for program and administrative purposes" and many districts are already doing this. However, local school boards should be allowed to make the determination as to when it is in the best interest of their schools to join with another district for these purposes.

The widely diversified educational situations in the rural communities of Montana do at times present quite a challenge to even those who live in them and can not be adequately addressed by "one size fits all legislation". Those diversities can best be dealt with by local boards of trustees so that decisions can be made that will be to the benefit of the people who the decisions will be affecting.

Since voting representation would be limited to one person from each of the rural schools based on the ratio of board members to students in the largest elementary school, the other two board members would soon lose interest in a process in which they had no voting power. The "heart" with which trustees currently operate independent elementary schools would soon be lost.

Ernest Anderson
2-3-93
Exhibit 2
SB-293

This would result in increased state aid of \$971,826 over the three year period for Teton County alone.

The consolidation would represent:

- 1) no savings in the area of foundation program or local taxes;
- 2) taxes in the rural communities would increase substantially while taxes in the larger district would decrease;
- 3) building programs and increases in teacher salaries and benefits would result in increased costs to the local district;
- 4) and state aid would increase by \$971,826 over the next three years in the form of general and transportation bonus payments as prescribed by law.

"Forced" consolidation does not represent a tax savings in Teton County.

I urge you to acknowledge the strength of local control and allow the local boards of trustees to make the decisions that will best fit the needs of the people that will be affected, thus giving Senate Bill 293 a do not pass.

it was located before the creation of the new district and the trustees are without capacity to act.

(7) If a petition has been filed under the provisions of this section and denied by the county superintendent, no new petition may be filed until 1 year after the final decision on the original petition.

(8) For the purposes of this section, the taxable value of the taxable property of the territory proposed to be included in the new district must be at least \$1 million, unless 50,000 acres or more of such proposed new district are nontaxable Indian land, and the taxable value of the taxable property of each existing district from which territory would be detached must be at least \$2 million after the territory is detached.

History: En. Sec. 1, Ch. 585, L. 1985; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 226, L. 1987; amd. Sec. 3, Ch. 371, L. 1987.

Part 4

School District Reorganization

20-6-401. Definitions. As used in this part, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, the following definitions apply:

(1) "Component districts" means the elementary or high school districts incorporated into the enlarged district.

(2) "Eligible pupils" means the average number belonging (ANB) in the operating schools of the component districts and the tuition pupils residing in the component districts and attending another district's school under the tuition provisions of the school laws, except that the pupils residing in the component district having the largest total number of pupils are ineligible for bonus payment consideration.

(3) "Enlarged district" means the elementary or high school district resulting from the consolidation or annexation of two or more component districts.

(4) "General bonus payment" for first- and second-class school districts must be \$450 per eligible pupil per year for a period of 3 years and must be deposited in the enlarged district's general fund. General bonus payment for third-class school districts must be \$750 per eligible pupil per year for a period of 3 years and must be deposited in the enlarged district's general fund. The general bonus payment must be made from the state school equalization aid account.

(5) "Transportation bonus payment" is the provision of 66 2/3% state financing of the on-schedule transportation amount as provided by the transportation provisions of the school laws. When an eligible pupil is entitled to transportation, the enlarged district is entitled to the transportation bonus payment for the eligible pupil for a period of 3 years. The payment must be made from the state transportation aid account. When the eligible pupil rides a bus providing transportation for ineligible pupils, the 66 2/3% state financing of the on-schedule amount for this payment must be prorated to provide financing for the eligible pupil.

History: En. Sec. 2, Ch. 125, L. 1971; R.C.M. 1947, 75-6541; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 205, L. 1981; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 185, L. 1985; amd. Sec. 4, Ch. 337, L. 1989; amd. Sec. 13, Ch. 11, Sp. L. June 1989.

DATE 2/3/93SENATE COMMITTEE ON EducationBILLS BEING HEARD TODAY: SB 293 HB 224

Name	Representing	Bill No.	Check One	
			Support	Oppose

JAMES STONE	OVANDO SCH. DIST.	293		X
Arch. E. HASSELL	Vaughn Sch. Dist.	293		X
DANN M. HASSELL	Vaughn Sch. Dist.	293		X
Steve Frost	Vaughn Sch. Dist.	293		X
Jane Brinkman	Vaughn School	293		X
Wm W. Kleinsasser	Auchard Creek School	293		X
Jacob J. Kleinsasser	Rockport Elem. School #41	293		X
John J. Wipf	New Rockport Elm. School	293		X
Dan P. Hoyer	Auchard Creek School	293		X
Jacob J. Wipf Jr.	Miller Colony Elem. School #18	293		X
Jacob B. Wipf Sr.	" " "	293		X
Warren Morehouse	Lec Co. Supt.	293		X
KARL ROOSA	Power Co. Supt.	293		X
Lora Frazic	S Ann			X
John Malee	M.F.T./M.F.S.E.	224	X	
Lizbeth Stueck	Jefferson Co Supt of Schools	293		X

VISITOR REGISTER

PLEASE LEAVE PREPARED STATEMENT WITH COMMITTEE SECRETARY

DATE 2/3/93

SENATE COMMITTEE ON Education

BILLS BEING HEARD TODAY: HB 224 - SB 293

Name	Representing	Bill No.	Check One Support Oppose	
<i>Ande Rici</i>	<i>Sch Dist #61</i>	<i>293</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Richard Brounall</i>	<i>Pendroy #61</i>	<i>293</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Charles N. Pearson</i>	<i>Greenfield #75</i>	<i>293</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Terry Nugent</i>	<i>Greenfield #75</i>	<i>293</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Ross Kiser</i>	<i>Brynum #12</i>	<i>293</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Joe Dellus</i>	<i>Brynum 12</i>	<i>293</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Scott Hayman</i>	<i>Goldsboro Ridge #45</i>	<i>293</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Penny Koke</i>	<i>Montana City #27</i>	<i>293</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Ronald STEGMANN</i>	<i>EAST HOLERA</i>	<i>293</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Robert O'Hara</i>	<i>Westby</i>	<i>293</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Grady Brattain</i>	<i>Vaughn School</i>	<i>293</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Eric Flawn</i>	<i>MSA</i>	<i>293</i>		
<i>Gabe Welch</i>	<i>Vaughn School</i>	<i>293</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Frank McGowan</i>	<i>Vaughn School</i>	<i>293</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>RACHAEL SIPS</i>	<i>unrec</i>	<i>295</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Kay Sext</i>		<i>293</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

VISITOR REGISTER

PLEASE LEAVE PREPARED STATEMENT WITH COMMITTEE SECRETARY

DATE Feb 3-93

SENATE COMMITTEE ON

Education

BILLS BEING HEARD TODAY:

HB 224 - SB 293

Name	Representing	Bill No.	Check One	
			Support	Oppose
<u>Gary M. Olsen</u>	<u>Teton County</u>	<u>293</u>		<u>X</u>
<u>Caroline Fosseth</u>	<u>Teton Co. Rural people</u>	<u>293</u>		<u>X</u>
<u>Mark Kennedy</u>	<u>Ulm School</u>	<u>293</u>		<u>X</u>
<u>Tina Hlad</u>	<u>Ulm School</u>	<u>293</u>		<u>X</u>
<u>Karen Johnson</u>	<u>Teton Co. Rural Ed.</u>	<u>293</u>		<u>X</u>
<u>Craig Brewington</u>	<u>Hellgate Elem. - Missoula</u>	<u>293</u>		<u>X</u>
<u>Larry Stoffuss</u>	<u>Chouteau Co. Supt of Schs</u>	<u>293</u>		<u>X</u>
<u>Katie Vandolah</u>	<u>Bynum School</u>	<u>293</u>		<u>X</u>
<u>Susan Luinstra</u>	<u>Bynum School</u>	<u>293</u>		<u>X</u>
<u>Jamie Massie</u>	<u>Golden Ridge Sch.</u>	<u>293</u>		<u>X</u>
<u>Dennis Schenk</u>	<u>Golden Ridge School</u>	<u>293</u>		<u>X</u>
<u>Elaine Wikes</u>	<u>Golden Ridge School #45</u>	<u>293</u>		<u>X</u>
<u>Camille G. Coughlin</u>	<u>Helmville School #15</u>	<u>293</u>		<u>X</u>
<u>Jay J. Coughlin</u>	<u>Helmville School #15</u>	<u>293</u>		<u>X</u>
<u>JAMES M. CALLO</u>	<u>HELMVILLE SCHOOL #15</u>	<u>293</u>		<u>X</u>
<u>Emily Hansmann</u>	<u>Pendery School #61</u>	<u>293</u>		<u>X</u>

VISITOR REGISTER

PLEASE LEAVE PREPARED STATEMENT WITH COMMITTEE SECRETARY

DATE 2/3/93

SENATE COMMITTEE ON Education

BILLS BEING HEARD TODAY: SB 293 HB 224

Name	Representing	Bill No.	Check One	
			Support	Oppose
Joyce Decker Wagner		293		X
Gayle Crum		293		X

VISITOR REGISTER

PLEASE LEAVE PREPARED STATEMENT WITH COMMITTEE SECRETARY

DATE 2/3/93

SENATE COMMITTEE ON

Education

BILLS BEING HEARD TODAY:

SB 224 - SB 293

Name

Representing

Bill
No.Check One
Support Oppose

Don Waldron	MREA	SB 223		✓
Brenda M. Shirley	Vaughn Public School	SB 293		✓
Hallie D. Olson	" "	" "		✓
Crystal J. Langford	" "	" "		✓
Lois K. Horne	" "	" "		✓
Bruce W. Maerer	MSBA	HB 224	X	
		SB 293		X
Darren A. Stortz				X
Jeremy Guelke				X
Mike Day				X
Dusty Fryberger				X
Michael East				X
Kathy BRINKMAN				X
Dora Wilson	OPI	SB 293	✓	
Madia Heinert	Vaughn School	SB 293	✓	✓
Lynda Brannon		SB 293		✓
Dore Simonson	Dig - 30	HB 224	✓	

VISITOR REGISTER

PLEASE LEAVE PREPARED STATEMENT WITH COMMITTEE SECRETARY

DATE 2/3/93

SENATE COMMITTEE ON Education

BILLS BEING HEARD TODAY: SB 293 - HB 224

Name	Representing	Bill No.	Check One	Support	Oppose
Powell Knowlen	Hobbs Club	293		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
JACK HAYDE	DUPUY, ER	293		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Lorna Frank	Mt. Farm Bureau	293		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Annette Cox	self / MT. CITY SCHOOL	293		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Sandra L. Goodwin	self / Mt. City School	293		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Jacob Walter	Spring Creek Colony Dist 104	293		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Hetty Watter R+2 Box 2238	Spring Creek Colony Lewisburg Mt 59457 School	293		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Edward Steh Box 3140	Lewisburg Mt 59457 Dist 15	293		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Mrs Paul J Walter	Box 518 Lewisburg #104	293		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Elias P. Wipf R22	Box 131, Choteau, Mont.	293		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
George D. Kofu	Pinckney, Mont.	293		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
John J. Klemmner	Wolf Creek Mt	293		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
George P. Kofu	Choteau, Mont	293		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
John Hollenback	Gold Creek	293		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Charles Gravelly	Avon	293		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Mick Lortie	Avon	293		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

VISITOR REGISTER

PLEASE LEAVE PREPARED STATEMENT WITH COMMITTEE SECRETARY

Senate Educ

Sm 439

SENATE EDUCATION

EXHIBIT NO

DATE 2/3/93

S BILL NO 293

Frontier Education Association
 Frontier Elementary School
 District #3
 Box 3043, Highway 13 South
 Wolf Point, Montana 59201

Montana House And Senate
 Education and Cultural Resources Committees:

RE: Senate Bill 293, School Consolidation Bill.

The undersigned Teachers and Staff of Frontier School wish to voice our strong opposition to forced consolidation of Independent Elementary School Districts.

We feel that in our district a forced consolidation would have an adverse effect on the education of our students. Throughout the years, we have maintained high standards of education for our students. Our students go on to be very successful in High School, College, and employment.

The cooperation between the parents, students, teachers school would be lost by forcing consolidation with a larger district. This cooperation has been one of the most important factors in the high achievement of our students.

Having only one administrator at this school, no money would be saved by forcing consolidation with an outside district.

John P. Ulrickson

James M. Stephens

Sally C. Pierce

Rebecca Christensen

Sharon Joan Hosen

Jennifer Hickok

Leri Sansaver

Kelli Kine

Cindy Stensland

David Zimmerman

Paul Boyd

Dawn Ligon

Leslie Crocker

Melody Weathermon

Virginia G. Ulrickson

We want to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak today. We would like to urge you to vote against Senate Bill 293.

A joint board would limit or eliminate the representation of the smaller independent elementary districts. In Teton County, two of the four independent elementary districts would receive one voting member on a board of thirteen. The other two schools would receive zero voting members on a board of thirteen. This little or no representation will leave the smaller districts at the mercy of the larger host high school district.

This is the same issue as losing a Representative in Washington D.C. The people of Montana lost a voice in the House of Representatives, just as the rural people in Montana will lose a voice in their children's education.

In these times of economical hardships, the host board members will feel that the best economical move they can make would be to close the independent elementary schools and bus the students to their school, which in the end would be "forced" consolidation. This would limit the voting power of the independent elementary school. The joint board's decision to close the school could result in higher taxes for the property owners in the elementary districts. The tax payers will not see this as being financially better for them. Should the schools be fortunate enough to remain open, will the "joint board" mandate new books and materials so that the school curriculum's will be in compliance with the host school's curriculum? Would the purchase of new text and materials be **cost efficient**? Would the materials of the independent elementary school become the property of the host school district?

We believe you are addressing the wrong issue. You want these children to get a "better" education. How can they receive a better education with more students competing for the teachers' attention in a large classroom? Are you willing to increase the teacher to pupil ratio with this bill and, in essence, lower the quality of education the smaller schools now supply with the lower teacher to student ratio. Do you really have the children's best interest in mind?

The majority of the children from one independent elementary have been on the honor roll once they enter the host high school district and score consistently higher on their achievement tests. The smaller elementary schools can meet the needs of every child whether the child's learning abilities are high or low.

There are many drawbacks of Bill 293 that need to be considered. One example is busing younger students to and from the host school. These children would spend an hour, one way, on the bus. Add this to a six hour day, the ride alone is one-fourth of their school day.

The quality of education in our smaller schools can at times surpass those in larger districts where they are already faced with over crowding. The individualized teaching methods used in small independent elementary schools benefit many students who in larger schools would be sent to Chapter One and Special Education and not mainstreamed such as in the smaller elementary schools.

In contrast, the administrative cost to run a host school is much higher than the cost of running an independent elementary school where the teachers perform the acts of an administrator. The building maintenance cost is significantly lower than building additional classrooms.

Montana is now one of the leaders in providing a quality education. We have a smaller student to teacher ratio and it pays off. If you decide to increase the student to teacher ratio, our quality of education will decline.

How many of you have been in a rural school as of late? Have you seen first hand how well the rural schools educate the students? We personally invite you or anyone to see how we conduct the business of learning in our independent elementary school. You don't need an appointment.

Charlotti Lacke, Supervising Teacher

Elaine Dirkes, Teacher
Jann Massie, Teacher

SENATE EDUCATION

EXHIBIT NO. 5

DATE 2/3/93
203

EXHIBIT 3

DATE 2/3

BILL NO. 293

SENATE BILL 293, WOULD ELIMINATE ONE OF THE LARGEST RURAL K

8 DISTRICTS IN THE STATE THAT IS PRESENTLY SERVING ^{ALMOST 200} OVER 265

^{encl. 70} SPECIAL EDUCATION AND CHAPTER I CHILDREN. YOU WOULD

ELIMINATE THEIR BOARD, LIMIT THEIR VOTING PRIVILEGE, HAVE

THEM ASSUME OTHER DISTRICTS DEBTS ~~WHEN THEY HAVE BEEN~~

~~FRUGILE~~, LIMIT THEIR ACCESS TO EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITY, AND

GIVE THEM ONE VOTE IN TIE BREAKER SITUATIONS.

BY SENATE BILL 293, YOU ARE ASKING VAUGHN TAX PAYERS TO

ASSUME UNDER CONSOLIDATION;

1. HIGHER ESCALATING HEALTH COSTS FOR EMPLOYEES

2. HIGHER RETIREMENT COSTS

3. HIGHER UNEMPLOYMENT COSTS

4. HIGHER TRANSPORTATION COSTS BOTH A/B AND

INTERSCHOLASTIC

5. HIGHER MAINTENANCE AND ASBESTOS COSTS

6. HIGHER LEGAL - NOW DEEP POCKET PHILOSOPHY WILL ENTER

IN

7. HIGHER AUDITORS EXPENSE

8. YOU EXPECT LOCAL TAXPAYERS TO PAY FOR TOTAL PARITY

OF WAGES AND BENEFITS WITHOUT BENEFIT OF IMPACT

STUDY AND TO ASSUME CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT

EXPENSE ^{that will} Now compounded.

9. WHAT ABOUT ASSUMPTION OF DEBT MERGING SCHOOL DISTRICTS
JUST LIKE THE SHARING OF ASSETS THEY WILL ASSUME THE
DEBTS. ALL THIS WITH LITTLE REPRESENTATION AND NO
CHOICE IN THE MATTER.

THIS BILL IS A TRAVESTY OF JUSTICE. ^{WTF} LITTLE OR NO NOTICE. NO
IMPACT STUDIES TO DETERMINE NET SAVINGS, NO CHOICE TO VOTERS
SIMPLY MANDATED - NO CHOICE FOR STUDENTS.

IT IS BASED ON THE PREMISE THAT BIGGER MAKES BETTER AND
HAVING RUN ⁹⁵⁰⁰ ~~10,000~~ STUDENT UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN NEW
YORK - THAT SIMPLY DOES NOT HOLD WITH CURRENT RESEARCH.

TWO DOUBLE A SCHOOLS 12 MILES AWAY, ONE CLASS B SCHOOL 15
MILES AWAY, AND ONE CLASS C SCHOOL 15 MILES AWAY. LET THE
VOTERS DECIDE.

THE VAUGHN SCHOOL UNIFIED WITH THE NEUMAN SCHOOL SEVERAL
YEARS AGO. WE HAVE TRANSPORTATION AGREEMENTS WITH
POWER SCHOOL DISTRICT TO BUS THOSE STUDENTS TO POWER, DUE
TO PROXIMITY. SENATE BILL 293 WOULD FORCE THOSE STUDENTS TO
TRAVEL 70 MILES A DAY VS. THE 20 MILES THEY NOW TRAVEL.
WITH 65% OF OUR REVENUES BEING GENERATED FROM THAT SECTION
OF OUR DISTRICT, THAT SITUATION WOULD DESTROY REVENUE
GENERATING EFFORTS, SUCH AS PASSING LEVIES.

Senate Education
Exhibit #3
2-3-93
SB-293

PLEASE DO YOUR HOMEWORK, CONDUCT IMPACT STUDIES. LOOK AT
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT, INTERSCHOLASTIC TRANSPORTATION,
PARITY OF WAGES/BENEFITS, ASSUMPTION OF JOINT DEBT,
RETIREMENT AND HEALTH COSTS, THEN SHOW THE TAX PAYERS
HOW YOU WILL SAVE MONEY AND PROVIDE THEIR CHILDREN WITH A
BETTER EDUCATION.

*You can't legislate Consolidation
because you can't find two districts
that are similar.*

*Any legislation that includes
county lines is a mistake - it must be
on a child benefit, cost effectiveness
basis.*

Thank you

SENATE EDUCATION

EXHIBIT NO. 4DATE 2/3S BILL NO. 293FAX COVER SHEETFAX NO. : 1-444-4105 DATE 2/3/93TO : SENATE EDUCATION & CULTURAL RESOURCE COMMITTEEATT: : Mr. Dennis HatcherSUBJECT : SB 293SENDER : JOAN RITTER CO. SUPT. SCHOOLS RICHLAND COUNTY

NUMBER OF PAGES : 1 COVER SHEET + 1 = 2 PAGES

*Cathy
Welch*

Senate Education

Exhibit #6

2-3-93

ULM PUBLIC SCHOOL SB-293

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 85

P.O. BOX 189, 6 ULM-VAUGHN ROAD

ULM, MT 59485-0189

AMANO A

February 3, 1993

Dear Chairman:

We are members of School District #85, Ulm Public School. We are a K - 8 school, with an enrollment of 95 students.

We are against Bill No# 293 and we would like to express our voice. We just heard about this hearing late yesterday afternoon and were unable to plan for our voices to be here in person.

We feel our students receive a quality education, with a maximum preparation for higher education and long time life skills.

Consolidation will cost sister districts additional money for increased facilities and faculty plus increase the number of students/teacher.

Many of the students have transferred from larger school districts to have a better student - teacher ratio.

Consider these facts long and hard before forcing consolidation:
quality education
student - teacher ratio
cost of additional space & staff

Burke

Andre w

Joellen Potter

Dustin

Ciera

Kate Haland

Mrs. Herdwick

Charge HANNAL

with Ryan

Angela

Christine McCann

Alan

Josh Hlad

RYANNA

Dusty Morris

Jo

Philip

Kathleen Mellinger

Jennifer Solid

GABRIELLE

Holly

LAURA

JOHN
JESSICA

KARL

John Kennedy
Tony Baldrynski
De Schulz

Thory Sallid
Gerard Robinson
Chuchie Parishin

KORY Hastings

MANDY Nemitz

ULM PUBLIC SCHOOL

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 85

P.O. BOX 189, 6 ULM-VAUGHN ROAD

ULM, MT 59485-0189

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cost of additional space & staff

4th Grade

Kate Shipley - Teacher

Jacob Meltinger

Jason Kendrickson

Logan Cook

Jared Song

Gus Flanagan

Tiffany A Morris

Justin Harant

Karsten Howland

Matthew Kohler

Kristen Buley

Staci Cordeiro

3rd grade

Julie Kelly - Teacher

Ray Cook

Devin Berner

Ashley Be
andrew Castle

ULM PUBLIC SCHOOL

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 85

P.O. BOX 189, 6 ULM-VAUGHN ROAD

ULM, MT 59485-0189

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4th Grade
Kate Shipley - Teacher
Jacob Meltinger
Jason Kendrickson
Logan Cook
Jared Song
Mrs. O'Hanigan
Tiffany A Morris
Austin Harant

Karsten Howland
Matthew Wohles
Kristen Buley
Staci Cordeiro
3rd grade
Jill Kelly - Teacher
Ashley Berry
Ray Cook
Andrew Castle
Dewin Berner

Jud Harris

Kathy Faldzinski

Katie Foster

Tim Sollid

Robbie Buley

Brad Bergstad

Chris Michaelson

~~the ...~~

Kathy Sawyer

Joe Lammert

Jeff Duff

ULM PUBLIC SCHOOL

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 85

P.O. BOX 189, 6 ULM-VAUGHN ROAD

ULM, MT 59485-0189

SENATE EDUCATION

IBIT NO. 6

DATE 2/3/93
S BILL NO. 293

February 3, 1993

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student - teacher ratio
cost of additional space & staff

Sara Gasvoda
Casey Daoley

Todd Byrner
Betty Castle

Levi Beyer
Jeremy Hyndman
Valrie Solid

Jason Gully
Noah Scholz

Beau Nemitz
David Kennedy

Lee McCombs

Andre Jarriel

Anthony Taylor
Scott Kent
Martha Kennedy

Brian David
John Spurgem

PLEASE CONSIDER
EXCELLENCE IN
EDUCATION FOR
OUR CHILDREN - -
SAVE OUR SMALL
SCHOOLS LIKE ULM
MONTANA. PEOPLE
OUT OF DISTRICT
BRING THEIR
CHILDREN HERE TO
PROTECT OUR
MOST VALUABLE
RESOURCE - - - -
OUR CHILDREN!!!!!!

SENATE EDUCATION
EXHIBIT NO. 6
DATE 2/3
BILL NO. 293

Senate Education
Exhibit # 7
2-3-93
SB-293

DEAR SIRs:

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, OPPOSE THE PASSAGE OF SENATE BILL 293 AND
ASK THE COMMITTEE TO KILL SENATE BILL 293 WHILE IN COMMITTEE.

Lucas Halverson

Lana Halverson

Joe Diller

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am strongly opposed To
Senate Bill 293

Anne Dellwo

Senate Education
Exhibit # 7
2-3-93
SB-293

February 3, 1993

Dear Mr. Chairman,

I am strongly opposed
to Senate Bill 293.

Vilbert Delluro

February 5, 1993

Dear Mr. Chairman,

I am strongly
opposed to Senate Bill 293.

Dward S. Delker

Senate Education
Exhibit #7
2-3-93
SB-293

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am strongly opposed To
Senate Bill 293.

Laurence E Delitto

Senate Education
Exhibit # 7
2-3-93
SB-293

DEAR SIRs:

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, OPPOSE THE PASSAGE OF SENATE BILL 293 AND
ASK THE COMMITTEE TO KILL SENATE BILL 293 WHILE IN COMMITTEE.

~~Little~~ Betty Kister

Ross Kister

Rt 2 Box 204A Choteau Mt 59422

Choteau, MT.

*Legislature***FLASH-FAX™**
NOTE

FROM:

NO. OF
PAGES

INCLUDING THIS

FLASH-FAX™

FAX #:

FAX #:

444-4105

PHONE #:

Rm 309
439

SUBJECT

MESSAGE

DATE *02-03-93*

*Please distribute to the addressed
members of the Senate Ed Committee
for their 1:00 PM meeting today*

☐ PLEASE REPLY☒ NO REPLY NECESSARY

SIGNED

Sharon Rau, Bus Mgr

PLEASE INFORM US IMMEDIATELY IF YOU DO NOT RECEIVE FACSIMILE IN FULL

EXHIBIT NO. *8*
DATE *2/3/93*
BILL NO. *293*

DEAR SIRs:

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, OPPOSE THE PASSAGE OF SENATE BILL 293 AND
ASK THE COMMITTEE TO KILL SENATE BILL 293 WHILE IN COMMITTEE.

Kenae K. Ostle

Bynum, MT

John R. Ostle

Bynum Mt.

Mildred B. Ostle

Bynum, MT.

Percy N. Ostle

Bynum Montana

Henry J. Ostle

Bynum Montana

Gloria Johnson

Bynum Montana

Kenneth Johnson

Bynum Montana

Gerda Willis

Bynum Mt.

Thelma Richards

Bynum Mt.

Carl N. Richards

Bynum MT

Listie Kesler

Bynum MT

Bruce Kesler

Bynum MT.

B. Sumner

Bynum MT

Full R. Severinsen

Bynum, MT

Loys K. Walker

Bynum Mt.

Billy K. Walker

Bynum MT

DEAR SIRs:

SENATE EDUCATION
EXHIBIT NO. 7

DATE 2/3/93
BILL NO. 293

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, OPPOSE THE PASSAGE OF SENATE BILL 293 AND
ASK THE COMMITTEE TO KILL SENATE BILL 293 WHILE IN COMMITTEE.

Maim Bynum 2-2-93

Bynum Mt 57419-827

Viv Perkins

Bynum Mt

Thyllis Perkins

Bynum Mt

Vicki L Baker

Bynum Mt 59419

David Sunkell

Bynum, Mt 59419-0756

Ira Perkins

Bynum, MT.

Earl Beckins

Bynum Mt.

Susan Austin

Choteau, Mt.

Sally Walker

Bynum, MT.

Susan Kessler

Choteau Mt

Jammie Lightner

Bynum, MT

Neaf D. Collins

Bynum, MT

Diane Collins

Bynum. MT.

Geo Holmgren

Bynum Mt

Mark DeBry

Bynum mt

Bela DeBrunker

Bynum, MT

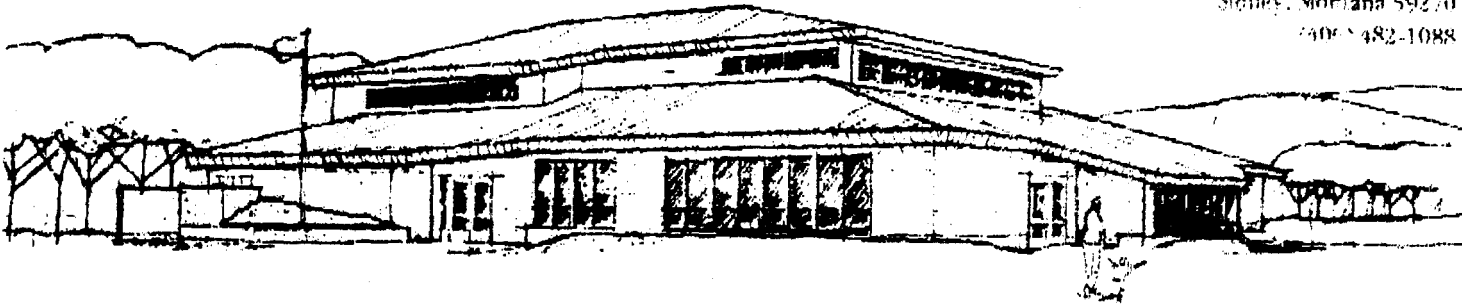
Senate Education
Exhibit #9
2-3-93
SB-293

-a cosmetic reduction in the number of school districts is simply a numbers game. Reducing the numbers of districts through the forced combining of rural districts with their high school will not save money, but cost more. Our district does not cost more per pupil to educate our students, but actually less than town by about \$400.00 per student. Our rural school has no superintendent or principal, but a supervising teacher who teaches full time in addition to her supervision duties so there is little administration cost.

We fully understand the need to cut costs, but this will not get you the result you want and is just as devastating to the rural elementary schools and the community of which they are a part as HB 143. Please kill SB293 in this committee.

RAU ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Skaar Route Box 4030
Sidney, Montana 59270
406-482-1088



February 2, 1993

TO: Chet Blaylock, Chair
Senate Ed Committee
State Capitol, Room 402
Helena, MT 59620
FAX # 444-4105

FROM: School Dist. #21 Board of Trustees
Rau Elementary School
HCR 57, Box 4030
Sidney, MT 59270
Telephone 482-1088

RE: SB 293

We strongly oppose SB 293 for the following reasons:

- Section 1 mandates consolidation with the high school district of which we are a part, but allows us essentially no representation (1 vote out of 8) on the joint board of which we would be a part. After one year we would have no vote. (Section 2, 7a,b,c)
- If this school were to remain open and become part of the Sidney School District, the staff would fall under the collective bargaining unit and salary schedule of that district which would increase salaries substantially, and along with that, benefits and employer share of taxes.
- A check of the County Assessor's office quickly reveals that a consolidation of the two districts would result in a "substantial increase" in the taxes of Dist. #21 taxpayers.
- Should the larger district decide to close our school and bus everyone into Sidney, costs would again increase because of: increased busing costs, additional staff to accomodate the Rau students and those of the other, smaller, rural school this bill would effect. Where are the savings? Either way there is an increase.