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### **Concerned Montana Citizens on “No Child Left Behind”**

I represent citizens of Montana who believe the No Child Left Behind Act is inefficient and impeding the progress of students in our school systems.

The No Child Left Behind Act enacts the theories of “standards-based education reform”. This is based on the belief that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals can improve individual outcomes in education. The fact is that it doesn’t. The NCLB is an act that not only leaves students behind, but in fact targets students who are disadvantaged and receive special education. The Act will eventually require 100% of all students to reach the same state requirements on standardized tests. For some students this is simply not possible, and for disabled students it is a violation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

The standardized tests required by NCLB are primarily Math, Science, and Reading. Teachers are currently forced to teach only skills required to take the test, instead of teaching the full range of the curriculum. This also hinders the ability for students to think “outside the box” which is important for a student to succeed well in college and in the work place. States are even encouraged to lie about test scores and lower their standards in order to receive more funding.

In Montana, a large problem is that rural schools are often singled out because when only a few students fall short it makes the entire school system look bad. If only one of any number of sub groups fail then the threat exists for the school to be shut down. This creates a negative learning environment for all students and increases stress in many school communities. When students are under stress they tend not to perform well. For minorities in Montana (including Native Americans on seven reservations), standardized testing is especially brutal. Cultural biases are inherent in this standardized form of testing.

Politically, schools and teachers should not be used as targets for a political agenda. This does nothing to further education. Both parties have recently shown the American public that schools are not at the top of their priority list and students are suffering for it.

In conclusion the No Child Left Behind Act has consistently shown to negatively impact the educational system of our country. I would support any legislation which promotes reforming or eliminating this Act in the state of Montana.