



GREATER
MONTANA
FOUNDATION

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January 27, 2017

TO: The Hon. Mike Cuffe, Chair, Long Range Planning Subcommittee
FROM: Greater Montana Foundation, *Sidney Armstrong*, Executive Director
RE: REQUEST FOR SUPPORT FOR HB 14, Jobs for Montana

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Greater Montana Foundation, it is my pleasure to express our strong support for HB 14, specifically for the Montana Heritage Center, the renovation and expansion of the Montana Historical Society (MHS) facilities. We request and we urge your support. It is a critical project and will be greatly appreciated.

The Greater Montana Foundation has as its core mission encouraging communication on issues, trends and values of importance to present and future generations of Montanans. A key element of fulfilling our mission is helping to ensure the understanding, preserving and sharing of our Montana history and culture upon which all of us can build for the future. The Montana Historical Society is, of course, at the heart of that preservation and sharing.

As evidence of our commitment to supporting the work of the MHS is the fact that we have contributed some \$600,000 to the Montana Heritage Center that is necessary to house, preserve and share the many MHS collections in ways required now and in the digital future. This is the largest grant ever awarded in the more than fifty years of our existence. Last week, the GMF Board voted to add another \$25,000 to our original grant, to emphasize how essential the new and updated facilities are.

The Montana Heritage Center can be accomplished only through a genuine public-private partnership. This must include adequate state funding appropriated by the Montana Legislature, coupled with donations from the private sector – business, foundations, and individuals. This is a real investment in the future, for all aspects of preserving our Montana history and culture, while providing an economic benefit as well, as was documented in a recent study by the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of Montana.

Some of our original grant has already been put to work to provide major new technology in the current auditorium, providing the opportunity for MHS to produce and present state-of-the art video, interactive and computer-based programming and live-streaming. This includes the large TV screen in the lobby, which features various items as well, as broadcasting auditorium programs to over-flow crowds.

(over please)

In addition, the collection of historic art and artifacts once belonging to our founder, Ed Craney, has been gifted to the MHS by the Greater Montana Foundation. It is on display in the auditorium, now called the Craney Studio. All this is transferrable to the new facilities.

Over the years, GMF is proud to have awarded other grants of over \$150,000 to the Montana Historical Society to help it fulfill its mission as we fulfill ours. We are proud to be considered a partner with the MHS in a number of other projects, including the restoration, digitization and preservation of Craney and GMF materials; the Montana Heritage Tour; promotion of rural museums; and, initiation and implementation of the Broadcast Film and Media Archives.

We will continue to encourage other organizations and individuals to join in these true public-private partnership efforts. But we cannot do what needs to be done alone. At their cores, the Montana Historical Society and the needed Montana Heritage Center are responsibilities of the State of Montana. We can help – and we will continue to do so. But leadership and support of state government must be the foundation of our efforts.

Thank you for your support for HB 14 and the Montana Heritage Center.