



March 29, 2021

MONTANA PUBLIC HEALTH CONTINUED ATTACKS

Montana Nurses Association (MNA) is thankful for Representative Frank Garner's House Bill 632, an Act implementing the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) providing for the appropriation of Federal Funds and other Funds available for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2021 and allowing the appropriation to continue into the 2023 biennium and providing conditions and restrictions on the use of funds with an immediate effective date.

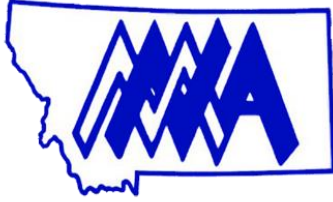
However, the real story and concern is in the overall guidance from Chair M. Regier, of Health and Human Services subcommittee, and noted from [Section B and D subcommittee APR Discussion](#): *In all cases, the membership encourages prioritization of capital improvements...of the ARP funding. In the cases of counties, municipalities, and schools if an entity's Covid-19 regulations are more restrictive than Covid-19 regulations for Montana the entity is not eligible for the recommended appropriations.*

Following this discussion, an amendment presented by Representative Matt Regier, also Vice-Chair of Appropriations, is as follows: Scroll down Page 16 of the [amended HB 632](#) section 24.

“NEW SECTION. Section 24. Reduction in funding -- health regulations. If a local government is awarded grant funds pursuant to [this act], the amount of the grant is reduced by 20% if that local government or any of its authorized agents have issued health regulations related to COVID-19 that are more strict than those imposed by the state.”

As MNA reads this amendment, some communities in our state will receive **20% less** than ARPA is funding, therefore, punishing communities that have followed strict public health guidance (safety of our citizens) and rewarding those communities that have not??

Representative M. Regier, (who has introduced anti-public health bills this session), led this committee to attack and punish evidence based public health policy, which is inexcusable. The Governor has even promoted proposals for more local control, however, this is contrary to that statement. The debate on HB 632 new section 24 happened today. Go to <http://sg001-harmony.sliq.net/00309/Harmony/en/PowerBrowser/PowerBrowserV2/20210329/-1/43139> and listen to Representative Sharon Stewart Peregoy address this amendment by stating “...cities and counties (are) being extorted to take off regulations...”



The following has been taken directly from the Montana Republican Party platform (<https://mtgop.org/about/party-platform/>), and with this amendment in section 24, seems contradictory.

- “centralization of political power ... enables the rise of totalitarianism”;
- “each level of government should continuously strive to limit the scope of its activity...”;
- “return control and authority to local communities, as the government closest and most responsive to the people”;
- “...No level of government should mandate responsibilities or programs to lower levels or subdivisions of government...”; and
- “The rights of individuals to vote on local governmental tax or fee issues and officials are fundamental to protect Constitutional rights.”
- These statements back the prevailing principle under State Administration: “We promote legislation for more local control.”

MNA asks Representative M. Regier to lead the subcommittee, protect Montana citizens, and stop attacking public health, moreover, support the counties and localities that have determined what public health restrictions are appropriate for their communities. Why is Representative M. Regier seeming to contradict his own party’s stance, supporting and giving counties and localities more control over public health, but then punishing communities for upholding recommended CDC (Centers for Disease Control) public health restrictions?

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