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FEB 28 2017

Ravalli County Planning Dept.

February 27, 2017

Board of County Commissioners  
Ravalli County Courthouse  
215 South Fourth, Suite A  
Hamilton, MT  
59840-2853

Dear Ravalli County Commissioners,

I had the honor of speaking with attendees to the 2017 Montana Association of Counties Midwinter Conference last week. I want to follow up on issues and importance to local government that I am working on as your new Superintendent of Public Instruction and thank you for your service to your local communities.

My Primary goal this legislative session is to give stability to your community schools. I am working to ensure that our state governments upholds its responsibility to equitably fund the state portion of education funding and not shift state responsibilities onto local governments and local taxpayers. I have also been advocating for the early passage of House Bill 191 which is the statutorily required inflationary increase to K-12 Base Aid that local schools need as they are beginning to craft their budgets for the next school year. I am pleased to say that this was signed by the Governor on February 23, 2017.

The education budget that I have offered is responsible to both students and local taxpayers. There are two areas of my budget that I want to highlight as they differ from what the Governor has proposed.

- He Removed NRD Payment = Tax Shift to Local Taxpayers
- He Removed Data for Achievement = Taken Directly from School Budgets

My budget resists these tax shifts and cuts because what the Governor has proposed is not an equitable or responsible way to fund education in Montana. I am urging the legislature to adopt my recommendations.

I am also working to ensure that Montana has a strong voice at the federal level. Local control and flexibility in education are important to your schools and they are important values to me. I promise to be a gatekeeper against federal overreach into your local schools. I have been in communication with our entire congressional delegation as well as the U.S. Department of Education to ensure that Montana has a seat at the table.

If the Montana Office of Public Instruction can ever be of assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elsie Arntzen".

Superintendent Elsie Arntzen

CC: Commissioner Ray Hawk, Commissioner Greg Chilcott, Commissioner Chris Hoffman, Commissioner Jeff Burrows, Commissioner Doug Schallenberger