

## Moore, Megan

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**From:** Larry Robertson <larryrob22@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 09, 2018 12:10 PM  
**To:** Moore, Megan  
**Subject:** RTIC meeting on July 10 and HJ22 agenda item

Dear Ms. Moore,

I am writing this as a private citizen, not a USDA employee. I have worked for the USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service for over 35 years. During my career I have worked with many large agricultural operations such as Leachman Cattle Co. in eastern Montana to several small producers in western Montana. There is little difference from large to small operations in that both invest large amounts of money to hopefully eek out a crop from year to year. Also, small operations invest much more per acre than larger ones.

Changing the agricultural designation to 1 acre or more will not only throw out several fruit producers, it will throw out hundreds of small operators across Montana, maybe over a thousand. All this for a handful of folks abusing the system. Lake County found 6 cheaters, why not just throw them out instead of harming small agriculture throughout all of Montana?. The economic impact to the state with this proposal will reduce overall tax income substantially compared to supporting ALL agriculture, as should be done according to Montana's Constitution.

I recall writing a letter to the taxation committee over a year ago outlining some of the same information as I do here. The initial DOR analysis said that changing agricultural designation this way will not affect agriculture or small business. After repeatedly asking for supporting documentation for this claim I was finally directed to the documentation. The DOR documentation for this statement was a memo stating that it will not affect agriculture or small business with absolutely no data to back this up! But it WILL adversely affect small agricultural businesses as our group has testified with real life scenarios.

I have a .65 acre vineyard and .25 acre orchard that will produce a minimum of \$60,000 to 80,000 of wine per year. The taxes my winery will pay starting in 2019, will far outstrip any additional revenue you can generate by this proposal.

I don't understand why this is a partisan issue, agriculture is Montana's largest industry, why can't we support all agriculture.

Thank you for your time,

Larry Robertson  
Flathead Lake Vineyard & Winery