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## The Access Fund

As a member of the Access Fund, I believe strongly that all climbing areas in the United States should be made available to the public, and should be maintained as wild areas. Montana has always been a haven for climbers of all types, with a climbing history that dates back to the times of the first pioneers, and we see it as our mission to uphold this longstanding tradition by assuring future generations access to rock, ice, and mountains unhindered by human laws.

Several historic areas in Montana are right now being threatened by illogical land ownership and poor lawmaking on the part of the state and county government in southwest Montana. Hyalite canyon has been one of the premier ice climbing destinations in North America, and annually attracts some of the best climbers in the world as well as countless recreational climbers who contribute greatly to the winter income of many small businesses in the Bozeman area. Recently, a new travel plan by the United States Forest Service put into jeopardy 77% of climbing in the canyon, and 92% of the beginner terrain. The access fund campaigned vigorously against this and won out; additionally, the forest service and the county agreed on a plan to begin plowing the often dangerous and impassable road to Hyalite starting the winter of 2008.

In addition to ice climbing, Montana is home to a great abundance of rock climbing, but much of this almost untapped area has the unfortunate distinction of being located on private land out of the reach of most climbers. The Access Fund has always brought up the argument that, because most of the climbing is located on land that serves a primarily agricultural purpose, the landowners have no need for the rock formations and may therefore actually benefit from allowing climbing on these formations by removing land that is not useful to them.

One such area is the Boulder Batholith in the Butte area, an area so heavily covered in rock as to render it useless to anything except climbing. There have been repeated attempts by the Fund to gain climbing access, but all have met either unresponsive or apathetic landowners, and much of this vast area remains unexplored and essentially unused.

The need to preserve the wild areas of Montana is one of the most important issues facing the state in modern times. Poor legislation and the uncaring eye of landowners has created an atmosphere that is hostile to those climbers who wish to experience the full potential that the mountains have to offer. Climbing is a spiritual experience, and, on the behalf of the Access fund, wish to provide areas in Montana in which all climbers can worship.

I will support bills that will help to assure that Montana remains pristine for all those who exist here.

*This document is in compliance with the Montana YMCA Youth Legislature Lobbyist Disclosure Policy.*