

By The Associated Press

A Helena businessman whose company was denied a state contract despite being the low bidder says Gov. Stan Stephens' administration isn't doing much to help small businesses in Montana.

"What is Stephens really doing to support Montana business?" asked Ron Stacey, owner of Montana Technical Services. "He's blown a lot of smoke but he hasn't done anything. He supports big business, but he doesn't do anything for small business."

Stacey has sued the state Department of Administration and the State Compensation

Mutual Insurance over their refusal to hire his firm for a computer maintenance contract.

He said he was prompted to speak out because of the recent controversy over the awarding of a sign-promotion contract. The Department of Highways recommended giving the contract to a Minnesota firm, but later reneged and reopened the bidding process after several Helena legislators complained.

Stacey said his company submitted the low bid of \$54,000 for the computer-maintenance contract for the work-comp office, but that the state decided to hire Wang Laboratories, the computer system's manufacturer. Wang

submitted a bid of \$98,000, he said.

Stacey sued last June and the lawsuit is still pending before District Judge Tom Honzel of Helena.

State officials have said that the work-comp agency preferred Wang because of its direct access to parts and its updated manuals.

Steve Yeakel, chief aide to Gov. Stephens, said recently that he take his role seriously as an "advocate for private local business," but defended the decision to hire Wang.

"I must leave the decision of which vendor can best serve the state to the officers who are experts in computers and contracting," he said.

Workers' compensation deficit rises

By The Associated Press

The state Workers' Compensation Fund's projected deficit has bounced upward by another \$10 million because of a recent Montana Supreme Court decision, state officials say.

A report by actuary C&B Consulting Group of San Francisco said the "unfunded liability" of the fund will reach \$207 million by June 30 — a \$10 million jump from projections at the end of March.

Patrick Sweeney, president of the State Compensation Mutual Insurance Fund, said the jump is linked to a Supreme Court decision in March that struck down a portion of the 1987 law that reformer workers' compensation in Montana.

"The court decision had a \$10 million impact," he said late last week.

The state work-comp fund's deficit is one of several problems the Legislature will be addressing during a special session that begins Monday.

Sweeney, who hailed the March projection as an indicator that the ballooning work-comp debt was finally on its way down, said projecting the unfunded liability is like a "moving target."

Russian filmmakers



TOURING HELENA — Russian filmmakers Gleb and Igor Aleinikov, left, explore downtown Helena last week. The Russians were in town to present "Red Fish in America," — a program of

Russian-made films and videos — at Second Story Cinema last weekend. The Aleinikovs' tour guide is Les Benedict of Second Story. (Staff photo by Gene Fischer)

7 p.m. — Harmony International, formerly the Sweet Peaches Chorus, meets at C.R. Anderson School. Interested women singers welcome. Call Mary Brainard, 227-8758. For Uptown County Charm Quartet performance information, call Kathe Schmit, 442-3975.

Organizations

Gay Men's Support Group. Call 442-1784 for more information.

Amnesty International meets the first Monday of each month at 7 p.m. at St. Paul's Methodist Church parlor.

Centering Through Guided Imagery" group meets at 7 p.m. Call Judy Garrity, 449-6821.

Overeaters Anonymous meets 7 p.m. Monday at St. Paul's United Methodist Church.

12-Step Co-Dependents Anonymous meets tonight and Thursday evenings at 8 p.m. at St. John's Lutheran Church, 1000 Helena Avenue.

It's In the Book AA meeting meets Mon-Fri., noon-1 p.m., at 410 Ninth Avenue.

Al-Anon noon lunch bunch will meet Tuesday at noon at St. Paul's United Methodist Church Bride's Room, 505 Logan.

AA We Care Group — Noon — 1900 9th Ave.

Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon meetings scheduled for tonight are:

7 — Al-Anon — Good grief group, Loft Room at St. Paul's Methodist Church, 505 Logan. Babysitting available.

7 — Al-Anon — Study group, Apt. No. 11, 8 S. Park.

7 — Alateen (8-13 years and 13-18 years) — St. Paul's United Methodist loft rooms, 505 Logan.

8 — AA — St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 505 Logan.

8 — AA — 1900 Ninth Ave.

8 — AA — New Women's Group will meet in St. Paul's Methodist Church, Upper Room.

8 — AA — United Methodist Church, 513 E. Riggs, East Helena.

8 — Al-Anon — Serenity Seekers, United Methodist Church, 513 E. Riggs, East Helena.

ACO Open Meeting 7:30 p.m. Mondays in Townsend at St. John's Episcopal Church, 314 Cedar.

Narcotics Anonymous meets Mondays at 8 p.m. at Helena Indian Alliance.

Alcoholics Triumphant meets tonight at First Assembly of God, 2210 Dodge, at 8 p.m.

Townsend Al-Anon meets Tuesday at 2 p.m. at St. John's Episcopal Church, 314 N. Cedar, Townsend.

AA Hotline, if you need help call 443-0438.

Co-Dependency Support Group is meeting at 5:30 p.m. Tuesdays at St. Paul's United Methodist Church. Call 449-8497.