



INDEPENDENT RECORD

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POINTS tax computer history

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HELENA — The costly tax computer system that never worked as it was supposed to was finally shut down at the end of the year and its successor is working as planned, state officials said.

The old computer program, called POINTS, cost the state millions before legislative whistle blowers pulled the plug and launched plans for a new system which took a few years to develop.

Revenue Dept. chief calls new system 'tremendous success'

That system, called IRIS, is now fully operational and running the state's day-to-day tax operations, said Revenue Director Dan Bucks.

"POINTS is done. It's over," Bucks said Tuesday. "IRIS is a tremendous success. It was developed on time and on budget."

The state sunk \$39 million into

POINTS over the years. The new and vastly improved system cost \$27 million, Bucks said.

State Sen. Dave Wanzonried, D-Missoula, said the former managers at the Department of Revenue were in a "state of denial" when he first started pointing out problems with the old computer system a few

years ago. Since then, however, Republicans and Democrats alike have worked together with the agency to fix the problem.

"Unfortunately it took too long to figure out we were spending money on a system that wasn't going to work," he said. "We now have a system that works. And it works in the way it is supposed to work."

POINTS, or Process Oriented Integrated Tax System, was intend-

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ed to provide one cohesive system for tax computing and tracking in Montana. Work on the new system began in late 2003, and was completed at the end of 2006 as ordered by the Legislature.

Bucks said the new system now allows the agency to look at all types of taxes for each taxpayer in a single place. Perhaps most importantly it is accurately counting tax bills, he said.

He said the agency is now able to provide much

better customer service to taxpayers, more able to identify unpaid taxes, and keeps track of more types of taxes.

The system was built by a company called Fast Enterprises that has built tax systems in other states, Bucks said.

Bucks said the state has learned "to look before you leap" when it come to computer systems. Most importantly, Republicans and Democrats worked together with agency managers to identify the problem and fix it.

"Good things can happen when people work together effectively," he said.