



A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY OF LOCAL FIRE PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY SERVICE ENTITIES AND FIREFIGHTER AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN BENEFITS.

WHEREAS, the Montana Legislature recognizes the invaluable public service provided by Montana's paid and volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians; and

WHEREAS, bills are introduced every session that would affect qualifications, duties, and benefits for paid and volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians; and

WHEREAS, legislation is also introduced that would affect the powers and duties of fire departments, fire districts, fire service areas, and fire companies; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation requires that counties provide workers' compensation insurance coverage for operators of firefighting apparatus provided to counties and assigned to fire agencies in the counties pursuant to agreements entered into as part of the State-County Cooperative Fire Protection Program; and

WHEREAS, many local fire agencies do not have the financial resources to comply with this requirement; and

WHEREAS, the powers, duties, and jurisdictions of local government fire agencies are varied and complex and warrant thorough analysis and understanding by the Legislature; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes that a comprehensive review of local fire protection, emergency services, and firefighter and emergency medical technician benefits is necessary to identify problems and consider potential solutions for provision of adequate, consistent, and coordinated local fire protection and emergency services and adequate, consistent, and coordinated benefits to paid and volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians who serve local governments and their citizens.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, to conduct a comprehensive study of local fire protection and emergency services, how those services are paid for, and benefits, including workers' compensation, disability, and retirement, provided to paid and volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the committee conducting the study:

(1) review the current structure and function of local fire protection agencies and emergency services, including municipal fire departments, rural fire districts, fire service areas, fire companies, and emergency medical technician services;

(2) review fire protection and emergency service coverage areas of the various local agencies compared to areas where the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and federal agencies provide direct fire protection, identifying any areas where there is no local agency coverage;

(3) examine the sources of revenue for the various local fire protection and emergency service agencies and how residents served by local agencies are made aware of the agencies' operational status;

(4) review the role of the state's Disaster and Emergency Services Division with respect to local fire protection and emergency service agencies;

(5) review the benefits provided to paid and volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians and the financial capacity of local governments to provide those benefits;

(6) review legislation introduced during the 64th Legislature and previous legislative sessions intended to modify local fire protection and emergency services and firefighter and emergency medical technician duties, qualifications, and benefits, the reasons for the legislation, and the outcome of the legislation;

(7) examine the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation's State-County Cooperative Fire Protection Program, the agreements entered into between the state and counties, and the coordination between the state and local governments for wildland fire protection;

(8) examine the services that local government firefighters and emergency medical technicians provide and how those services are reimbursed by citizens, insurance companies, and state and federal agencies;

(9) examine the viability, necessity, and jurisdiction of the various local government fire protection entities provided for in state statute; and

(10) determine whether modifications to statutes or state or local policies are warranted to achieve adequacy, consistency, and coordination in local government fire protection and emergency services and in the

benefits provided to paid and volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the committee solicit participation and input from local governments, paid firefighters, volunteer firefighters, representatives of firefighter organizations, representatives of the Montana Public Employees' Retirement Administration, the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, the Department of Labor and Industry, the Department of Military Affairs' Disaster and Emergency Services Division, and any other entity that the committee considers to be appropriate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the interim committee to which the study is assigned prioritize the areas of study.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2016.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions, comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 65th Legislature.

- END -

I hereby certify that the within joint resolution,
SJ 0021, originated in the Senate.

Secretary of the Senate

President of the Senate

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2015.

Speaker of the House

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2015.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 21
INTRODUCED BY T. FACEY, K. HANSEN

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