

1 SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 34

2 INTRODUCED BY C. JUNEAU

3
4 A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF
5 MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY TO EXAMINE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POVERTY
6 AND EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT IN MONTANA'S K-12 SCHOOLS AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS
7 THAT ADDRESS ANY BARRIERS TO EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT THAT MIGHT BE POSED BY
8 POVERTY; AND REQUIRING THAT THE FINAL RESULTS OF THE STUDY BE REPORTED TO THE 62ND
9 LEGISLATURE.

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11 WHEREAS, Article X, section 1, of the Montana Constitution affirms that it is the goal of the people to
12 establish a system of education that will develop the full educational potential of each person and that equality
13 of educational opportunity is guaranteed to each person of the state; and

14 WHEREAS, Richard Rothstein writes in the book "Class and the Classroom" that the connection between
15 social and economic disadvantage and an academic achievement gap is well known but adds that most
16 educators avoid the obvious implication that improving poorer children's learning requires ameliorating the social
17 and economic conditions of their lives; and

18 WHEREAS, the poverty rate in Montana for children under 18 years of age was 18.9% in 2007; and

19 WHEREAS, the statewide free and reduced-price school lunch program, a proxy indicator of economic
20 disadvantage, served 39.7% of Montana's elementary student population and 20.2% of the high school student
21 population in 2006; and

22 WHEREAS, children living in poverty in Montana are less likely to have contact with adults who use a
23 robust vocabulary, to have enriching out-of-school educational experiences, and to have quiet and well-equipped
24 places to study while at the same time are more likely to have responsibilities in the home that limit time available
25 for homework; and

26 WHEREAS, of the 37 schools in Montana identified as being in the restructuring phase of No Child Left
27 Behind, 36 are schools with between 50% and 100% Indian population; and

28 WHEREAS, criterion referenced test scores for Title I and Indian children have shown gaps over time
29 in reading, math, and science achievement compared to other students; and

30 WHEREAS, the Legislature, as provided in section 20-9-309, MCA, is required to provide a basic system

1 of free quality public elementary and secondary schools that will guarantee equality of educational opportunity
2 to all and, in funding this system, consider various educationally relevant factors that include the needs of
3 students with special needs, such as at-risk students, and the needs of Indian students; and

4 WHEREAS, high school dropout rates have increased for the past 4 years in Montana with the current
5 rates being 5.2% overall, 4.4% for white students, and 11.5% for Indians; and

6 WHEREAS, in *Helena Elementary School Dist. No. 1 v. State*, 236 Mont. 44, 769 P.2d 684 (1989), the
7 Montana Supreme Court ruled that Article X, section 1(2), of the Montana Constitution "establishes a special
8 burden in Montana for the education of American Indian children which must be addressed as a part of the school
9 funding issues".

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

13 That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee, pursuant to
14 section 5-5-217, MCA, or direct sufficient staff resources to study the relationship between poverty and
15 educational achievement in Montana's K-12 schools.

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this study:

17 (1) examine the educational achievement of impoverished school children in Montana and how poverty
18 impacts educational achievement in non-Indian and Indian communities;

19 (2) include a review of literature and research on this issue as well as data from Montana's schools and
20 communities that may be impacted by poverty factors;

21 (3) ensure the full participation of the Office of Public Instruction, the Governor's Office, and the Board
22 of Crime Control, as well as the Departments of Justice, Corrections, Commerce, Labor and Industry, and Public
23 Health and Human Services and other appropriate state agencies; and

24 (4) after having drawn conclusions about any barriers to educational achievement in Montana associated
25 with poverty, produce recommendations for legislative action and agency policy in areas that may include but are
26 not limited to:

27 (a) after-school and summer school enrichment opportunities;

28 (b) safety nets and interventions that support students who are at risk of dropping out;

29 (c) school policies that are responsive to the needs of at-risk children and families;

30 (d) teacher preparation for teaching at-risk students; and

1 (e) parental and community involvement and outreach.

2 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the study is assigned to staff, any findings or conclusions be
3 presented to and reviewed by an appropriate committee designated by the Legislative Council.

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review
5 requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2010.

6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions,
7 comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 62nd Legislature.

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