

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 8

INTRODUCED BY B. HAWKS

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A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA URGING THE BOARD OF REGENTS AND THE COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO STUDY THE GROWING DIVIDE BETWEEN RURAL AND URBAN COMMUNITIES AND PRESENT THE FINDINGS AND THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY TO THE LEGISLATURE'S EDUCATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT INTERIM COMMITTEE.

WHEREAS, sustainable economic development in Montana is jeopardized by a growing divide between Montana's rural and urban communities; and

WHEREAS, rural communities face increasing economic challenges due to a declining population and limited access to technology, capital, health care, educational resources, and agricultural market services; and

WHEREAS, urban communities are dependent on rural areas to meet increasing demands for energy, agricultural products, timber, clean water, and access to hunting, fishing, open space, and recreation; and

WHEREAS, urban and rural development associated with inadequate planning continues to shrink the rural areas available for agricultural production, energy production, and natural resource development required to meet increasing demand; and

WHEREAS, rural and urban communities are interdependent and should share a common interest in and an aspiration for a sustainable economic future for Montana; and

WHEREAS, Montana needs to develop solutions to the rural and urban divide that can be reached only through partnership and collaboration based on an integrated community vision that connects rather than divides Montana's rural and urban communities; and

WHEREAS, the Montana University System has the knowledge base, research facilities, and outreach capabilities to provide a leadership role in promoting research, analysis, and dialog on these issues; and

WHEREAS, if Montana establishes a successful ongoing approach to examining rural and urban challenges and developing integrated solutions, Montana's approach may serve as a model to assist other states in finding a common vision for improved quality of life for both rural and urban communities and a more sustainable economic future.



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

3 That the Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Higher Education are urged to oversee and direct
4 a study that:

5 (1) examines the nature of the rural and urban divide in Montana;

6 (2) requires the collection and analysis of data concerning Montana's rural and urban demographics that
7 will focus on sustainable land use policy, business and industrial growth, workforce needs, food and water
8 consumption, agricultural and livestock production capabilities, energy consumption and production capabilities,
9 natural resource consumption and development capabilities, access to health care and educational resources,
10 access to hunting, fishing, open space, and recreation, and other rural and urban issues;

11 (3) brings urban and rural interest groups, stakeholders, and policy analysts together to share information
12 and discuss ways to build partnerships and to develop action plans for moving Montana toward a more inclusive
13 format in rural and urban affairs; and

14 (4) explores the feasibility of conducting a pilot project and establishing and funding a rural-urban institute
15 as part of the Montana University System that can provide ongoing research and analysis of rural and urban
16 interdependence and facilitate ongoing strategic planning in the public and private sectors to overcome the
17 rural-urban divide and move Montana forward as one Montana.

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the findings and recommendations of the study be presented to the
19 Legislature's Education and Local Government Interim Committee before July 1, 2012.

20 - END -