



THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES
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A Confederation of the Salish,
Pend d' Oreille
and Kootenai Tribes

March 12, 2015

(H) Business and Labor Committee
Honorable Tom Berry, Chairman
Honorable Ryan Lynch, Vice Chair
Honorable Dan Salomon, Vice Chair
64th Montana Legislature

TRIBAL COUNCIL MEMBERS:
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RE: HJ - 20 - Study resolution to address a Montana living wage

Chairman Berry and Committee Members:

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes ("CSKT") support HJ 20 for a study of a living wage.

This legislative session we saw several attempts to set a new minimum wage. HJ 20 will study the economy in Montana and provide more information for decision makers. This study will enable everyone to better understand the business impacts of a new minimum wage or the impacts of a living wage in Montana.

Such a study would not be a meaningless exercise in number crunching. There are indications that it would reveal important structural deficiencies in our local economy. For example, last November, the *Missoulian* reported the results of a study, "Equity in Balance," that examined wage statistics in 10 states, including Montana. A living wage was defined as "the amount needed to pay for your basics – shelter, food, clothing, along with health care insurance and a little left over to save." The report stated that in Montana, a living wage for a single adult is \$14.40/hour, and half of Montana's female workers earn less than this.

The report also stated that the living wage for households with 2 adults and 2 children, with one adult working, is \$28.44/hour, and only 12% of Montana female workers and only 8% of Native American workers earn that much. The report also found that less than half of all workers in 4 of 5 Montana households earn a living wage.

Montanans deserve the opportunity to at least identify what a living wage is in this State. The CSKT respectfully request this committees support of HJ 20.

Respectfully Submitted,

Vernon S. Finley, Chairman
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes