



MONTANA LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Legislative Fiscal Division

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Director
AMY CARLSON

DATE: February 18, 2010

TO: Legislative Finance Committee

FROM: Taryn Purdy
Legislative Fiscal Division

RE: LFC Brainstorming Session

After the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) brainstorming session on December 4, committee members expressed a desire to continue and build on the discussion at the March LFC meeting. Part of the agenda for the meeting on March 4 is devoted to continuance of the brainstorming.

Attached is a listing of the ideas and suggestions for further discussion generated at the December LFC brainstorming session. The categories were developed by staff for ease of review and choice for further discussion, and do not reflect any committee designation.

As the budget picture has deteriorated and the committee's focus has by necessity begun to narrow in this interim, the committee may also wish to narrow the focus of this brainstorming session, including:

- Delaying discussion of more general committee procedures and operations until the beginning of the next interim
- Focusing on how the committee will respond to and what the committee needs in the deepening fiscal crisis

To that end, staff has highlighted several of the comments generated at the December meeting for potential narrowing of committee discussion. Duplicate or near-duplicate comments are not highlighted. However, the highlights are of course only suggestions and the committee has the full range of choices available.

Questions Generated by LFC at Planning Session December 4, 2009

General Committee Role/Purpose/Processes/Ops	Making the Committee/Legislature Effective	Staff Use/Training/Transition	Committee Role in Budgeting/Budget Crisis	Interim Committees and LFC Role
Should LFC examine the appropriations process (i.e. to reduce Senate logjam)?	Should we force a connection between HAC and other House policy committees (sit in committee to exchange status of policy)	Should we be cross-training staff (research/legal and fiscal)	Should we address those who feel “on the outs” in the process	What relationship should there be between the interim committees and the LFC
Should the LFC look more closely at statutory appropriations and allow legislators closer scrutiny	What about tax and expenditure committee disconnect	How do we roll the audit staff in	How does LFC pursue information to best help the next legislature deal with financial crisis – what information do we want	How does the LFC more directly influence interim committee action
Should certain bills be required to go through LFC	Should the legislature be required to pass a revenue estimate	What are the expectations for staff availability	Will we work through the crisis together	What would be the upside and downside of the “council concept”
Should the LFC look at other funds and their relationship and potentially simplify the budget system	What process should we have to help legislators get additional information/analysis of amendments and intent	What more should be done to ensure adequate staff transition	Is LFC role preparatory – will LFC be able to prepare	Do we give part of our staff to other committees
Could we have a “master list” for audits under categories based on past studies	How can the committee and staff more effectively use their current power (to executive/agencies/etc.)	Is staff sufficient and properly trained to meet all committee needs	Will the LFC find out everything before November – can we get information out in March before the session	What is our role in relation to other policy committees? Should legislative staffers be involved
Will we perform functions only in the interim	Where are the pivot points for the LFC/legislature to leverage the executive branch	Should LFC evaluate its needs and ensure staff is sufficient to meet the legislature’s needs	How soon will we need to have options available to make decisions	Should there be a greater connection between LFC and other committees
What is unique about this committee	Do we look at a new process to get information (i.e. other state models)	Could we have a “super director” (fiscal, audit, legal, research)	How do we get the information to agencies and other policy committees	Should individual LFC members be assigned to observe interim committees
What is our authority	Would there be staffing levels if we look at a new model	What about a team concept with staffers	Who will we be working with – budget office? Agencies?	

General Committee Role/Purpose/Processes/Ops	Making the Committee/Legislature Effective	Staff Use/Training/Transition	Committee Role in Budgeting/Budget Crisis	Interim Committees and LFC Role
Should statutory authority be examined or revised	How do we collaborate with the staff		Can we get information from agencies – most important versus least important items	
Should the primary focus of the LFC be changed (i.e. to fiscal impact)	Should LFC take a larger role in training		What box will we give agencies to budget with	
Is financial risk management a primary focus/role of the committee	What appropriations training should be done and when		How will we be proactive (if you want something new, what will have to go)	
Does the LFC role vary based on financial condition (deficit vs. surplus)	Do we come up with things the executive branch then comments on – do we wait for them			
Should the LFC examine required reports (such as with a subcommittee)				
Should the LFC have a simple or supermajority to recommend legislation				
Will LFC role change dealing with a different Governor				
Do we want an independent point of view – create a legislative budget				
Should LFC have a parallel budget				
What will be our role as individual legislators during the session vis-à-vis LFC action				
Should the LFC be required to have certain membership (i.e. at least one from each subcommittee)				