

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 15
INTRODUCED BY P. WAGMAN

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA URGING THE U.S. SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE AND THE U.S. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO DIRECT THE APPROPRIATE FEDERAL AGENCIES TO EXPEDITE THE ELIMINATION OF BRUCELLOSIS IN THE YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK BISON AND ELK HERDS.

WHEREAS, an essential element of proper wildlife management is the maintenance of healthy animal populations; and

WHEREAS, the disease brucellosis (*Brucella abortus*) has been known to be present in the Yellowstone National Park bison herd for 86 years; and

WHEREAS, the bison population of Yellowstone National Park is now in excess of 4,000 bison; and

WHEREAS, in the 1999-2000 final environmental impact statement of the interagency bison management plan for the State of Montana and Yellowstone National Park, one of the objectives was to commit to the eventual elimination of brucellosis in bison and other wildlife; and

WHEREAS, the State of Montana, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Department of the Interior agreed in a 1995 memorandum of understanding that an objective was to plan for the elimination of brucellosis from the greater Yellowstone area by the year 2010; and

WHEREAS, a cattle herd in Idaho has been infected with brucellosis by elk from Yellowstone National Park; and

WHEREAS, Yellowstone National Park bison that have been infected with or exposed to brucellosis and elk that may have been infected with or exposed to brucellosis frequently make nomadic or migratory movements into Montana, threatening the health of Montana citizens as well as the state's livestock industry and brucellosis class-free status; and

WHEREAS, for years, Montana has been forced to react to the nomadic movements of bison from Yellowstone National Park into Montana with drastic and costly measures, including hazing, capturing, and lethally removing bison, to protect the health and welfare of Montana citizens and the livestock industry; and

WHEREAS, elimination of brucellosis in the Yellowstone National Park bison and elk herds would mitigate a public health and livestock concern and reduce ongoing state expenses related to the nomadic movement of bison from Yellowstone National Park; and

WHEREAS, although an effective brucellosis vaccine exists for domestic cattle, a similar vaccine or vaccines should be developed, tested, and implemented in the Yellowstone National Park wild bison and elk herds as soon as possible; and

WHEREAS, alternative brucellosis elimination strategies, in addition to or preceding brucellosis vaccination, such as but not limited to habitat improvement and population management within Yellowstone National Park, should also be expeditiously implemented if shown to facilitate or to be effective for eliminating brucellosis in bison or elk.

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

That the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and the U.S. Secretary of the Interior be urged to direct the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Veterinary Services Office, the National Park Service, and any other affected federal agencies to undertake the expeditious elimination of brucellosis in the Yellowstone National Park bison and elk herds by developing and implementing a brucellosis elimination program.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be sent by the Secretary of State to the members of the Montana Congressional Delegation, the President of the United States, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, and the Director of the National Park Service.

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