

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 18

INTRODUCED BY K. WAITSCHIES

BY REQUEST OF THE HOUSE AGRICULTURE STANDING COMMITTEE

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA URGING FEDERAL EMERGENCY DISASTER ASSISTANCE FOR CROP AND LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS WHO HAVE SUFFERED LOSSES DURING THE 2001 AND 2002 AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION YEARS BECAUSE OF DROUGHT AND URGING AN EARLY DECISION ON THE RELEASE OF CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM ACREAGES FOR HAYING AND GRAZING PURPOSES.

WHEREAS, agriculture is Montana's number one industry and is vital to the state's economy; and
WHEREAS, Montana is in its fifth, and in some places sixth, year of drought; and
WHEREAS, excluding 2001 production, the 2002 crop year was the smallest on record since 1940; and
WHEREAS, Montana ranchers have decreased their herds of cattle by 100,000 head in 2002 due to drought; and

WHEREAS, prolonged drought yields poor pasture and range conditions for livestock and wildlife; and
WHEREAS, weather forecasters are predicting continued dry "El Nino" weather conditions for 2003; and
WHEREAS, other disasters, such as hurricanes, floods, and tornadoes, are typically designated as worthy of emergency spending.

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

(1) That the United States Congress is urged to pass emergency disaster assistance for Montana's farmers, ranchers, and rural communities.

(2) That disaster assistance should be all-inclusive and cover production losses for field crops, specialty crops, and livestock.

(3) That disaster assistance should be comprehensive and cover losses for both the 2001 and 2002 agricultural production years.

(4) That funding should be an emergency designation and thereby protect the 2002 Farm Bill and all its varied programs and priorities.

(5) That the United States Secretary of Agriculture is urged to make an early decision with regard to the

use of conservation reserve program acreages for haying and grazing purposes.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Secretary of State send a copy of this resolution to the President of the United States, the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture, and the Montana Congressional Delegation.

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