

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 32
INTRODUCED BY D. HAINES

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING THAT THE GOVERNOR, THE MONTANA CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION, AND THE U.S. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR SEEK THE IMMEDIATE REMOVAL OF THE GRAY WOLF FROM THE ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST AND THE RETURN OF CONTROL OF THE WOLF TO THE STATE; URGING MONTANA OFFICIALS TO ACTIVELY PURSUE THE DELISTING EFFORT ON TERMS FAVORABLE TO MONTANA AND RECOMMENDING CERTAIN SPECIFIC TERMS FOR DELISTING; AND URGING THE STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL TO JOIN THE STATE IN ANY LEGAL ACTION BROUGHT TO BLOCK THE WOLF DELISTING PROCESS.

WHEREAS, the gray wolf has been declared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to be an endangered species, notwithstanding plentiful numbers of wolves in Alaska and Canada; and

WHEREAS, because of the protection afforded by the endangered species designation, gray wolves have been reintroduced into and have become reestablished in Montana; and

WHEREAS, estimates of current Montana wolf population numbers vary from 200 to 1,000 wolves; and

WHEREAS, professional biological wolf studies in Alaska, Minnesota, and Canada have found that as long as wolves have prey animals to feed upon, uncontrolled wolf populations will expand at a rate of 34% or more a year; and

WHEREAS, this studied rate of wolf population growth is consistent with wolf population expansion observed in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming; and

WHEREAS, wolves in Montana currently feed primarily on elk and disproportionately on young replacement elk born in the spring of each year; and

WHEREAS, with elk composing about 80% of a wolf's diet, it is estimated that each wolf will kill between 60 and 100 elk each year; and

WHEREAS, the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks estimates that there are about 94,000 elk in Montana; and

WHEREAS, given the documented rate of uncontrolled wolf population expansion, the expected consumption rate of elk by wolves, and the limited supply of elk in Montana, it is reasonable to project devastation of Montana elk herds by wolves within the next few years if the expansion of wolf populations is not aggressively

controlled very soon; and

WHEREAS, unchecked predation by wolves will almost certainly bring an end to elk hunting by the people of Montana and will subsequently impact other wildlife resources, livestock, pets, and outdoor recreation; and

WHEREAS, in addition to impacting Montana's long heritage and culture of hunting, these negative impacts will also have a profound economic consequence for Montana people and communities.

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

That the Governor, the Montana Congressional Delegation, and the U.S. Secretary of the Interior be strongly urged to aggressively seek the immediate removal of the gray wolf from the endangered species list and the complete return of control over and management of wolves in Montana to Montana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Montana resist federal pressure to accept wolf delisting on terms unfavorable to Montana and that the Governor and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks be urged not to accept wolf delisting unless the terms of delisting are favorable to Montana and include:

- (1) funding for wolf management from federal sources;
- (2) a definition of "breeding pair" that includes only one breeding male and one breeding female of any wolf pack and their single litter of pups under 6 months of age; and
- (3) complete abandonment of federal enforcement authority over wolves.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if any wolf delisting opponent files a lawsuit to block or restrict any planned or actual delisting of wolves by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Montana Attorney General be urged to immediately join the state in that lawsuit to vigorously protect the interests of Montana in gaining wolf delisting.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be sent by the Secretary of State to the Governor, the Montana Congressional Delegation, the Montana Attorney General, the Director of the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, and the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

- END -