

HOUSE BILL NO. 368

INTRODUCED BY D. HIMMELBERGER

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT PROVIDING APPROPRIATIONS TO THE LEGISLATIVE SERVICES DIVISION AND TO THE MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY TO SUPPORT BROADCASTING SERVICES AND PERMANENT PRESERVATION OF TELEVISED LEGISLATIVE PROCEEDINGS."

WHEREAS, the Legislature in 2001 established a state-funded public affairs television program to provide Montana citizens with increased access to unbiased information about state government; and

WHEREAS, the Legislative Services Division has the statutory duty, pursuant to section 5-11-1111, MCA, to administer the television program and to develop and implement a plan to provide the maximum attainable distribution of telecasts in order to reach as many Montana citizens as possible; and

WHEREAS, although the Legislature in 2001 and in subsequent sessions hoped that the transmission and distribution of the televised proceedings could be financed with federal grants and private contributions, these funding sources have been unreliable and insufficient; and

WHEREAS, the gavel-to-gavel coverage of state government proceedings, known as TVMT programming, will for the first time be made available in eight urban markets, where approximately 350,000 cable customers reside, during the 2007 legislative session as a result of a pilot program partnership involving Helena Civic Television, Bresnan Communications, VisionNet, Inc., and the Legislative Services Division; and

WHEREAS, public funding is required to sustain the noncommercial integrity of TVMT programming and expand the public-private partnership described above so that citizens in rural, urban, and reservation communities all across Montana have access to unfiltered coverage of state government activities; and

WHEREAS, the Legislative Services Division has a historic duty to provide the Montana Historical Society with official records of permanent value to the state, as provided in section 22-3-202, MCA, and the Montana Historical Society is not currently equipped to archive and preserve, or provide access to, digital recordings of the televised proceedings.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

NEW SECTION. Section 1. Appropriations. (1) There is appropriated \$250,000 from the general fund to the legislative services division for the 2009 biennium to maximize the accessibility of gavel-to-gavel coverage

of the legislative proceedings to additional Montana citizens.

(2) There is appropriated \$85,000 from the general fund to the Montana historical society for the preservation of digital recordings to make the content of televised proceedings of the legislature available to the public on a permanent basis.

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