

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 33
INTRODUCED BY B. THOMAS

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY OF ISSUES RELATED TO POLIO AND POSTPOLIO SEQUELAE IN MONTANA, THEIR IMPACTS IN MONTANA, AND WAYS TO ADDRESS POLIO-RELATED ISSUES TO IMPROVE THE LONG-TERM HEALTH OF MONTANANS.

WHEREAS, the injectable polio vaccine first developed in the 1950s eliminated naturally occurring polio cases in the United States but has not yet eliminated polio in other parts of the world; and

WHEREAS, as few as 57% of American children receive all doses of necessary vaccines during childhood, including the polio vaccine; and

WHEREAS, the success of the polio vaccines has caused people to forget the 1.6 million Americans who were born before the development of the vaccines and who contracted polio during the epidemics in the middle of the 20th century; and

WHEREAS, at least 70% of the paralytic polio survivors and 40% of nonparalytic polio survivors are developing postpolio sequelae, which are unexpected and often disabling symptoms that occur up to 35 years after the poliovirus attack, including overwhelming fatigue, muscle weakness, muscle and joint pain, sleep disorders, heightened sensitivity to anesthesia, and difficulty in swallowing and in breathing; and

WHEREAS, research and clinical work have discovered that postpolio sequelae can be treated, and even prevented, if polio survivors are taught to conserve energy and use assistive devices to stop damaging and killing the reduced number of overworked, poliovirus-damaged neurons in the spinal cord and brain that survived the polio attack; and

WHEREAS, many medical professionals and polio survivors do not know of the existence of postpolio sequelae or of the available treatments.

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

That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, or direct sufficient staff resources to study and make recommendations on:

(1) the number of Montana children who do not receive recommended childhood vaccinations, including

the polio vaccination, and the number of Montanans who contracted polio and are suffering or may in the future suffer from postpolio sequelae;

(2) ways to increase the number of Montanans vaccinated against polio and other diseases, including but not limited to improved education about the need to follow the recommended schedule of vaccinations for infants, children, and adults and measures that the state could take to encourage and ensure that children receive the vaccinations that they need;

(3) issues regarding postpolio sequelae, including but not limited to improved education on the risk factors, the signs and symptoms of the syndrome, and the ways to treat and prevent postpolio sequelae; and

(4) additional efforts that could be undertaken through the collaborative efforts of the Department of Public Health and Human Services, local boards of health, groups promoting childhood vaccinations, and groups working on issues related to postpolio sequelae, to improve the long-term health of Montana's children and adults as it relates to polio and postpolio sequelae.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the study is assigned to staff, any findings or conclusions be presented to and reviewed by an appropriate committee designated by the Legislative Council.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2008.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions, comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 61st Legislature.

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