

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 55  
INTRODUCED BY R. KOOPMAN

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY TO INVESTIGATE THE CURRENT STATE OF INTELLECTUAL DIVERSITY IN THE MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM.

WHEREAS, the creation of knowledge results from the continuous testing of claims to truth, the encouragement of criticism, the toleration of diverse opinions, and the open opportunity to examine, interrogate, and challenge any claim; and

WHEREAS, intellectual diversity is the foundation of a learning environment that exposes students to a variety of political, ideological, and other perspectives when these perspectives relate to the subject matter being taught or issues being discussed; and

WHEREAS, colleges and universities should welcome intellectual diversity and the free exchange of ideas as values indispensable to teaching, program development, and a liberal education; and

WHEREAS, teachers should not take unfair advantage of students by indoctrinating them with the teachers' own opinions before the students have had an opportunity to examine other opinions; and

WHEREAS, academic decisions, including grades, should be based solely on considerations that are intellectually relevant to the subject matter under consideration; and

WHEREAS, members of the campus community who believe that they have been treated unfairly in academic matters must have access to a clear institutional process by which grievances can be addressed; and

WHEREAS, political and ideological bias in hiring, promotion, and tenure is unacceptable; and

WHEREAS, intellectual diversity must be achieved in ways that protect values such as academic freedom, shared governance, and academic standards; and

WHEREAS, faculty, administrators, and the Board of Regents should take the initiative in meeting the challenge of intellectual diversity; and

WHEREAS, there is a high degree of consensus on the principles set forth in a statement entitled "Academic Rights and Responsibilities" that was issued by the American Council on Education on behalf of 30 higher education organizations; and

WHEREAS, surveys increasingly reveal ideological imbalance in the classroom, evidence of politicization, and public concern over these issues; and

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of governing boards to ensure that institutional policies and procedures promote, for all students and faculty, an open atmosphere in which a range of viewpoints can be freely expressed.

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 conduct a study of the current state of intellectual diversity in the Montana university system, including the steps that the individual units are taking to ensure student exposure to a wide range of perspectives and ideologies, and to protect the unimpeded free exchange of ideas.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that areas of investigation may include, but are not limited to:

- (1) grievance procedures concerning intellectual diversity;
- (2) balance in campus speaker programs and panels;
- (3) speech codes that might restrict free speech;
- (4) intellectual diversity as part of student course evaluations;
- (5) distribution of mandatory student fees;
- (6) fairness in hiring, tenure, and promotion policies;
- (7) fairness in classroom policies and teaching guidelines;
- (8) freedom of the press;
- (9) policies concerning hecklers and related behavior; and
- (10) ongoing self-evaluation by each campus on intellectual diversity issues.

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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