

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 13

INTRODUCED BY SMITH, STEINBEISSER, BALES, L. JONES, STAHL, REINHART

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY TO EVALUATE METHODS AND RECOMMEND WAYS TO ADD VALUE TO MONTANA AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS THROUGH REDEVELOPMENT OF A FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRY; AND REQUIRING THAT THE FINAL RESULTS OF THE STUDY BE REPORTED TO THE 61ST LEGISLATURE.

WHEREAS, most of the \$3 billion that Montanans spend on food each year goes to out-of-state companies; and

WHEREAS, the lack of a food processing infrastructure is a primary barrier inhibiting the ability of farmers and ranchers to serve in-state markets; and

WHEREAS, Montana's neighboring states add as much as eight to nine times more value to their agricultural products than Montana; and

WHEREAS, the food processing industry was Montana's number one employer through the 1940s, but today the Montana food processing industry is negligible; and

WHEREAS, Montana farmers, ranchers, small business entrepreneurs, and community economies would benefit from redevelopment of a food processing industry; and

WHEREAS, Montana's climate and soils can support production of a much greater diversity of agricultural and food products than are currently produced; and

WHEREAS, value-added enterprises owned by Montanans retain more of the value that is added to agricultural products in Montana communities; and

WHEREAS, producing food for local markets can reconnect Montana's rural and urban economies; and

WHEREAS, dependence on bulk raw commodity export markets diminishes the viability of Montana's rural economies and family farms and ranches; and

WHEREAS, food production on a family or community scale can enhance stewardship of Montana's natural and human resources; and

WHEREAS, value-added food production can contribute to the economic development goals of many communities.

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 study committee or statutory committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, or direct sufficient staff resources to:

(1) identify and compile statistics on model programs and policies that have been effective in supporting the development of value-added food enterprises and a strong entrepreneurial culture within the food and agriculture sectors;

(2) when possible, include a summary of the economic, social, and environmental impacts of each of these model programs and policies;

(3) identify the barriers to value-added food production in Montana;

(4) using the findings, recommend public and private programs and policies appropriate to Montana that:

(a) support value-added food production that keeps money circulating in Montana's communities;

(b) sustain the state's natural resources; and

(c) encourage fair treatment of participants at each step in the food value chain, from field to table; and

(5) determine methods used by other states with geography similar to Montana to add more value to raw agricultural products.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the study consider input from:

(1) producers of livestock and crops;

(2) value-added meat processors;

(3) value-added nonmeat food processors;

(4) public and private economic developers;

(5) nonprofit, community-based food system advocates;

(6) Montana State University-Bozeman agriculture extension agents;

(7) Montana State University-Bozeman extension nutritionists;

(8) University of Montana-Missoula food system researchers;

(9) Agriculture Development Division staff at the Department of Agriculture;

(10) Business Resources Division staff at the Department of Commerce;

(11) food distributors and wholesalers;

(12) state legislators;

(13) the Governor's Office of Economic Development; and

(14) the food and consumer safety section staff of the Department of Public Health and Human Services;

AND

(15) THE DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK.

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 committee, be reported to the 61st Legislature.

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