

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 26

INTRODUCED BY M. DUNWELL

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A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA FOR AN INTERIM STUDY OF EMPLOYMENT, WAGES, AND BENEFITS FOR THE marginally EMPLOYED, THE SELF-EMPLOYED, AND OTHERS TO DETERMINE THE NECESSITY OR SCOPE OF A LIVING WAGE IN MONTANA.

WHEREAS, the economic theory of supply and demand is only one of many factors in determining wages, which also depends on the right match of experience and training for jobs; and

WHEREAS, the high number of Montana small employers sometimes is considered a factor in lower-wage jobs that hold Montana's average annual wages below the national average; and

WHEREAS, there are many unknowns related to the impact of Main Street and other small businesses on the Montana economy in terms of whether the owners are receiving lower take-home pay than their employees but offsetting those losses with tax benefits or whether the minimum wage itself impacts these businesses to so great an extent that discussion of a living wage would be considerably more difficult; and

WHEREAS, more information is needed to determine which occupations pay minimum wage, whether employee turnover is inconsequential to a company that pays minimum wage, and what impact changes in the minimum wage would have on these occupations and the companies that pay minimum wage; and

WHEREAS, the subject of a living wage is best viewed in a multidimensional context that incorporates Montana's vast geographic distances, which include high-poverty counties as well as university towns where high numbers of highly skilled employees work or seek work; and

WHEREAS, implementation of a living wage is best weighed against both costs and benefits to the state's economy, and more information is necessary to assess both potential costs and possible benefits specific to Montana.

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, to:



1 (1) work with the Montana Chamber of Commerce, the Montana unit of the National Federation of  
2 Independent Business, the Montana Restaurant Association, the Montana Retail Association, the Department  
3 of Labor and Industry, the Department of Commerce, Montana labor unions, nonprofit organizations, social  
4 service advocates, and other interested parties to determine the impacts of existing increases in the minimum  
5 wage since adoption of the inflation index in 2007 and the prospective impacts of a living wage on Montana  
6 employers and employees, with particular emphasis on impacts in different geographic areas of Montana;

7 (2) compile analyses of the costs and benefits in communities that have adopted a living wage;

8 (3) to the extent possible, compile employment data, including information on employee turnover and  
9 wages, regarding Main Street and other small businesses, tax benefits related to small businesses, and income  
10 disparities across the state and across business size and ownership;

11 (4) work with representatives of college placement officers, Job Service offices, and high school  
12 counselors to determine what factors go into matching applicants and job skills and what areas might be improved  
13 in Montana to provide better matches of applicants to needed skills;

14 (5) to the extent possible, assess the number of sole proprietors, independent contractors, home-based  
15 workers, and multiple part-time job holders to determine whether the patchwork of jobs is a choice or a necessity;  
16 and

17 (6) develop recommendations regarding the feasibility and possible extent of a living wage or a  
18 combination of a living wage and fringe benefits in Montana for the 66th Legislature.

19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the study address costs for employees' transportation to jobs,  
20 child-care services, elder care services, health care insurance not offered by an employer, and vacation or sick  
21 leave for personal or family illnesses to determine if these factors offset or aggravate employment conditions in  
22 Montana.

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that any findings or conclusions be presented to and reviewed by an  
24 appropriate committee designated by the Legislative Council.

25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review  
26 requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2018.

27 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions,  
28 comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 66th Legislature.

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