

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 20

INTRODUCED BY J. SMALL

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY OF FACTORS AFFECTING UNEMPLOYMENT IN HIGH-POVERTY AREAS AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS.

WHEREAS, Montana's unemployment rate of 4.0% in December 2016 was below the nation's average of 4.7%, an indication of healthy employment yet one that, as a statewide average, smooths over the complex differences between urban areas, where jobs are more plentiful and more varied, and many smaller communities, some of which have high unemployment, low levels of job openings, and high poverty rates; and

WHEREAS, unemployment data currently accounts only for people who are working or looking for work but misses people who are not counted as being in the labor force, including people who have given up looking for work because no jobs exist or accommodations are not made for disabilities or for family obligations that require intermittent absences or additional availability of caregivers; and

WHEREAS, many grants promoting improved work opportunities or increased access to jobs and technological infrastructure rely on unemployment data, which means that smoothed-out but timely data is a disadvantage for high-unemployment areas of the state.

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 examine the many factors involved in unemployment, including:

- (1) lack of jobs and whether the available jobs:
  - (a) require skills not available in the general locale;
  - (b) pay a wage with benefits, including paid leave, health insurance, or contributions toward retirement benefits;
- (2) lack of transportation to jobs and the corollary costs and impact in cases in which employers provide transportation to jobs;
- (3) lack of child care or elder care and the corollary costs and impact in cases in which employers

1 provide onsite child care; or

2 (4) lack of accommodation for disabilities and the corollary costs and impact in cases in which employers  
3 provide accommodations for disabilities.

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that consultants familiar with the differences related to the terms  
5 "discouraged worker", "marginally attached worker", "available for work and not working", and similar descriptions  
6 be invited to discuss the philosophy about unemployment in Montana's high-poverty areas, including on Indian  
7 reservations, and whether improved understanding of reasons behind unemployment might help redirect  
8 resources to improve job growth in high-poverty areas.

9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the interim committee examine:

10 (1) the location and placement success of job service or third-party equivalent services, along with the  
11 programs put in place with employers at each job service for apprenticeships or other training opportunities;

12 (2) course offerings at community and tribal colleges as they relate to local employer needs and activities  
13 within communities aimed at improving responsiveness for employer job openings;

14 (3) availability of internet and broadband services and other components that enable workers to either  
15 leave home for jobs or work at home.

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

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

20 - END -