

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 20

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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;



