

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 23

INTRODUCED BY K. DUDIK

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A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM LEGISLATIVE STUDY OF THE STRUCTURE, FUNDING, AND OUTREACH OF THE MONTANA VETERANS' AFFAIRS DIVISION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS.

WHEREAS, more than ~~91,000~~ 98,000 veterans live in Montana, which is more than ~~44%~~ 9% of our state's total population; and

WHEREAS, our veterans and their families rely on the state-level Montana Veterans' Affairs Division of the Department of Military Affairs (MVAD) to help veterans submit claims to access the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs benefits and health care services to which they are entitled; and

WHEREAS, outreach is critical and the MVAD has only nine state veteran service offices to service the entire state; and

WHEREAS, examination of how many veterans MVAD actually reaches and services county-by-county will provide the Legislature with insight and a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges involved; and

WHEREAS, for fiscal year 2019, the Legislature appropriated \$1,180,298 in general fund and \$835,373 in special revenue for the MVAD's services, not including for cemeteries, and the Legislature should evaluate whether this is sufficient to meet the need; and

WHEREAS, other models for delivering veteran benefit claims services, including community-based county offices, should be explored; and

WHEREAS, a legislative interim study would also help determine how to improve outreach and increase the number of veterans served.

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) gather information about the current organizational structure, funding, number of veterans served,
2 and outreach efforts of the Montana Veterans' Affairs Division;

3 (2) evaluate other service delivery models, such as county-based models and the service structures used
4 in other states;

5 (3) examine options for improving outreach and increasing the number of veterans served, including in
6 Indian country;

7 (4) solicit input and recommendations from the Board of Veterans' Affairs, counties, veterans and their
8 families, and all other stakeholders and interested persons about how to maintain and improve the services of
9 the Montana Veterans' Affairs Division; and

10 (5) develop recommendations as appropriate based on the study's findings.

11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review
12 requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2020.

13 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions,
14 comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 67th Legislature.

15 - END -