

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 44

INTRODUCED BY B. HAMLETT

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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 TIMBER MANAGEMENT ON STATE TRUST LANDS AND HOW OR IF TIMBER CONSERVATION PROPOSALS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED; REQUIRING THAT FINAL RESULTS OF THE STUDY BE REPORTED TO THE 67TH LEGISLATURE.

WHEREAS, the Legislature created a timber conservation license two decades ago in response to opposition on some timber sales on state school trust lands from conservation groups and local citizens; and

WHEREAS, proponents said the law would require conservation proposals to compete equally with logging proposals on school trust lands; and

WHEREAS, the provision was rarely used until recently when a local group submitted a winning bid to conserve timber on a proposed logging sale; and

WHEREAS, the recent proposal raised many questions about the timber conservation license law, the rules implementing it, and whether or not such an option should exist at all; and

WHEREAS, state law requires that school trust lands be managed to secure the largest measure of legitimate and reasonable advantage to the state and in a manner that best meets the needs of the people and the beneficiaries of the trust; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature is obligated to review how timber sales on trust lands are managed and examine options that maximize revenue while maintaining healthy forests.

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, or direct sufficient staff resources to:

- (1) examine existing state laws related to timber conservation licenses, the history of those laws, and rules implementing those laws;
- (2) review how western states manage timber on trust lands and how those states, if any, address conservation proposals;



- 1 (3) solicit and consider comments, concerns, and suggestions from all interested stakeholder groups;
- 2 (4) identify and analyze relevant policy and logistical issues and options; and
- 3 (5) if appropriate, develop a committee bill to revise or repeal state laws based on the committee's study
- 4 findings and recommendations.

5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study be concluded prior to September 15, 2020.

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

8 - END -