

REPORTS TO THE LEGISLATURE

THE CLEARINGHOUSE CONUNDRUM

The Montana Legislature receives hundreds of statutorily required reports from various state agencies, interim committees, as well as the Governor's Office. The Legislative Services Division, in accordance with 5-11-210, MCA, compiles reports to the Legislature prior to the start of each session and offers those reports to individual legislators. The law requires the division to act as a clearinghouse or repository for reports.

Reports are defined as "a written report required by law to be given to or filed with the legislature." Reports also include multistate compact reporting requirements, reports to the Legislative Fiscal Analyst, and numerous reports to interim committees.

The law was last amended in 2011, with the addition of an allowance for electronic reporting. Interim committees are also required to review reports and determine if they are useful and should be maintained. Before September 1 of each year preceding a session, the division is required to prepare a list of all required reports that includes:

- the final title of the report;
- an abstract or description of the contents of the report, not to exceed 100 words;
- if the report is available electronically, its location on the internet; and
- a recommendation on how many paper copies of the report, if any, should be provided to the legislature.

Throughout Montana law there also are inconsistent references to the reporting requirement. There are instances where reports are requested annually, yet in accordance with 5-11-210, MCA, which only requires biennial reporting. There are also numerous reports required in law, but lacking a reference to 5-11-210, MCA, further complicating tracking of these reports.

To consolidate reports to the legislature and to assist the division in compiling a complete list for legislators each interim, Legislative Services staff is requesting guidance from the Legislative Council on amending the existing statutes to better meet its requirements as a clearinghouse.

With the Legislative Council's approval, staff proposes the preparation of a bill draft that consolidates reporting requirements and simplifies the mandates established in 5-11-210, MCA. The draft could be presented to members during the March 2020 meeting for review, input, and further modification.

Reports to the Legislature 5-11-210, MCA	
Reports to the Legislature	72
Reports to Interim Committees	112
Reports to Fiscal Analyst/Finance Committee	17
Interstate Compact and Agreement Reports	10
Total	211
References to 5-11-210 in the MCA	71
The Great Reporting Gap	140

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