

Summary of Actions
Meeting #1: Aug. 3, 2009

At its organizational meeting on August 3, 2009, the LJIC made the following decisions:

- elected Rep. Shannon Augare (D-Browning) as Presiding Officer;
- elected Rep. Ron Stoker (R-Darby) as Vice-Presiding Officer;
- set the SJR 39 study of DUI laws as its top study priority;
- decided that the SJR 29 study of biological evidence for DNA analysis in felony cases should be focused on retention and storage and not on broader issues involving collection and access, so reduced the proposed staff and committee time for that study accordingly;
- identified that the public defender system and the implementation of the LJIC's mental health diversion bills (HB 130, HB 131, and HB 132), which passed with amendments during the 2009 Regular Session, should be the primary concern with respect to the committee's statutory oversight duties, but also requested ongoing written updates from the Department of Justice on the backlog related to implementation of the MERLIN system;
- agreed to send a committee letter to the Legislative Council requesting that the Council sponsor legislation for the 2011 Session that would statutorily assign the Office of State Public Defender to the Law and Justice Interim Committee rather than to the State Administration and Veterans' Affairs Interim Committee;
- decided to examine as an emerging issue placement in prerelease centers and community corrections programs of sex offenders upon their release from prison (a study requested by the Corrections Advisory Council);
- decided to examine as an emerging issue the problem of pet hoarding and appropriate penalties, mental health considerations, and public funding challenges for the care of pets in county custody;
- decided to not conduct any meetings outside of Helena where the Capitol's hearing rooms have live audio and video capability and from which meetings are broadcast on MTTV; however, members may still make individual site visits and take tours of correctional facilities, programs such as WatCH, the state crime lab, and local evidence rooms;
- decided to adopt the proposed meeting schedule, except that the LJIC's next meeting, a two-day meeting, would be on Monday and Tuesday, September 28 and 29.