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STATE-TRIBAL RELATIONS INTERIM COMMITTEE
67th Montana Legislature

SENATE MEMBERS

Jen Gross
Daniel Salomon
Jason Small
Frank Smith

HOUSE MEMBERS

Jade Bahr
Alan Doane
Casey Knudsen
Rae Peppers
Joe Read
Sharon Stewart-Peregoy

COMMITTEE STAFF

Laura Sankey - Attorney
Bri Nordhagen - Secretary
Hope Stockwell - Research
Analyst

MINUTES LOG

May 06, 2020
12:58 PM
Zoom - Helena

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ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Sen. Jason Small, Chair (R)
Rep. Rae Peppers, Vice Chair (D)
Rep. Jade Bahr (D)
Rep. Alan Doane (R)
Sen. Jen Gross (D)
Rep. Joe Read (R)
Sen. Daniel Salomon (R)

Sen. Frank Smith (D)
Rep. Sharon Stewart-Peregoy (D)
Rep. Casey Knudsen (R)

Members Excused:

Members Absent:

Staff Present:

Laura Sankey, Attorney
Bri Nordhagen, Secretary
Hope Stockwell, Research
Analyst

AGENDA (Attachment 1)

Committee Business Summary

- On May 8, the STRC voted 7-1 to send letters to the editors of various news organizations to encourage the public to comply with tribal COVID - 19 restrictions.

STRC Call to Order - Roll Call

12:56:18 Chairman Sen. Small

Joint meeting with Blackfeet Tribal Business Council

13:01:18 Opening Prayer and Welcome
Sen. Small opened the floor to the Blackfeet Tribal Council for topics of discussion.

13:03:10 Blackfeet Secretary Stacey Keller asked about how missing persons investigations are being conducted after the passage of state legislation in 2019. Ms. Stockwell discussed the missing persons specialist position created by House Bill 21 (2019). Ms. Stockwell reviewed the recommendations the STRC received from the Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force at the STRC's March meeting.

13:15:57 Blackfeet Councilman Mark Pollock discussed restrictions the Tribal Council has enacted to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within the reservation. Mr. Pollock asked whether the STRC could help spread the message that recreational sites on the reservation are not open at this time.

13:20:28 Secretary Keller discussed the Council's concerns about public observance of tribal restrictions while other parts of the state begin reopening. Secretary Keller said the Blackfeet needed help getting the word about ongoing reservation closures out to the public.

13:23:49 Rep. Peppers stated a letter was needed to inform the public they can travel through the reservations safely and gas up during COVID - 19, but to observe tribal restrictions.

13:25:06 Sen. Small asked Ms. Stockwell to work on a draft letter for the STRC to consider.

13:28:18 Secretary Keller discussed the overwhelming nature of the many issues the Council has had to deal with in the past few weeks.

13:29:09 Sen. Small asked Ms. Stockwell to review the STRC's study topics to see if the Council had any input to provide on these issues.

13:29:55 Ms. Stockwell reviewed the HJ 10 study, identifying and improving barriers to voting by American Indians.

13:32:03 Ms. Stockwell reviewed the study regarding the maintenance of state highways and other highways within reservation boundaries.

13:32:40 Ms. Stockwell reviewed the study regarding runaway youth.

13:34:32 Sen. Small asked if the Council would like to discuss any of the study topics.

13:34:51 Secretary Keller raised questions about voting by mail and how ballots are distributed, particularly for residences that house multiple generations.

13:37:02 Sen. Small asked how the switch to mail ballot elections for the primary came about. Sen. Small asked how the satellite offices for the counties impacted by the Wandering Medicine litigation would be operating. Ms. Stockwell responded.

13:38:50 Councilman Pollock asked for more information about the use of plus codes on the Navajo Nation as discussed by the STRC at its March meeting.

13:39:55 Councilman Pollock stated his support in doing more work regarding runaway youth on the Blackfeet Reservation.

13:45:14 Rep. Read asked the Blackfeet Council members how their relationship was with Glacier County and the County commissioners, and with Pondera County commissioners regarding the COVID-19 response. Secretary Keller and Councilman Terry Tatsey responded.

13:57:05 Rep. Read discussed the relationship between the CSKT and Lake County during the COVID - response. Mr. Pollock responded.

14:00:34 Councilman. Pollock asked if Glacier County was going to be able to bear the cost of mail in ballots. Sen. Small asked Ms. Stockwell if she had any information. Ms. Stockwell did not but said the committee could ask Dana Corson from the Secretary of State's Office.

14:01:34 Rep. Stewart Peregoy asked if some of the COVID - response funds could be used. Rep. Stewart Peregoy asked if the Tribal Council had received any money from the federal government that had been promised through the initial phase. Sen. Small and Ms. Stockwell discussed upcoming speakers on the STRC agenda that may be able to provide further information.

14:05:13 Rep. Stewart Peregoy asked if there was any correspondence to the committee from Secretary of State Corey Stapleton. Sen. Small said no. Rep. Stewart Peregoy said the committee should ask for clarification on the use of COVID - 19 funds for election costs.

14:06:33 Jason Smith, the governor's director of Indian Affairs, joined the discussion. He said he does not receive information about whether a tribe has received COVID-19 funds unless the tribe discloses that to him.

14:07:40 Secretary Keller said the Blackfeet Tribe received its funds this morning.

14:08:13 and expected Dana Corson would be able to respond when he speaks with the committee on Friday. Rep. Stewart Peregoy and Councilman Pollock agreed with the suggestion.

14:09:52 Councilman Tatsey commented on polling places within the reservation boundaries and discussed tribal elections.
14:12:30 Smith discussed traffic on reservations and decisions made by the tribal council in conjunction with advice from the public health board.

Public comment on any matter under the jurisdiction of the STRC but not on this agenda

14:15:00 None

RECESS

14:21:57