

State-Tribal Relations Committee

Draft Work Plan for the 2007-2008 Interim

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Introduction

The eight-member State-Tribal Relations Committee is unlike the other interim committees that have administrative rule reviews, agency monitoring, program evaluation, or the requirement to review draft legislation of agencies that the committee monitors. Instead, the committee has the following duties, as listed in 5-5-229, MCA:

- act as a liaison with tribal governments;
- encourage state-tribal and local government-tribal cooperation;
- conduct interim studies as assigned; and
- report its activities, findings, or recommendations to the legislature and propose any legislation recommended by the committee.

In the past, the committee has fulfilled the liaison and cooperation responsibilities by visiting at least two Indian reservations during the interim and meeting with various state agency officials to discuss issues brought to the attention of the committee by tribal leaders and committee members.

In this interim, the committee has no studies assigned to it but may want reports from other interim committees studying water issues, education, and health care or other issues of interest to committee members.

Recommended Activities and Schedule

Starting with the 2001-2002 interim, the first interim for the newly constituted State-Tribal Relations Committee, the committee began visiting reservations. That first interim, the committee visited the Rocky Boy Reservation, the Flathead Reservation, and the Northern Cheyenne Reservation.¹ In the 2003-2004 interim, visits were made to the Fort Belknap and Northern Cheyenne Reservations. Last interim, the committee visited the Fort Peck and the Blackfeet Reservations. This interim, staff will be working to arrange an invitation from the Crow Reservation. A second reservation visit would be appropriate to the Flathead, Rocky Boy, Fort Belknap, or Northern Cheyenne Reservations.

¹The official record shows the Rocky Boy and Flathead Reservations but a member of the interim committee said the Northern Cheyenne also was visited.

Budgeting for the committee includes travel and per diem for two 2-day meetings expected for visits to the reservations in addition to three or four meetings in Helena. Travel is difficult much later than October or earlier than May, so the recommended visits to reservations are September and May. Three or four meetings in addition to these will round out the interim committee time. Suggested times for Helena meetings are: January, March, and July or August 2008. A fourth meeting could be held in September 2008, if necessary.

Member Issues

Among issues that members have suggested to date are:

- a review of fee lands within the boundaries of Indian reservations;
- gambling on reservations;
- education on reservations and the amount of money spent in relation to graduation or dropout rates and how best to address dropout problems;
- compacts, such as water, that the state, tribes, and Congress must all agree to;
- social and economic issues;
- reservation access issues (roads, recreation, other?)
- Indian Education for All; and
- the role of reservations.

Staff Recommendations

A report, *The Tribal Nations of Montana*, published by the Legislative Services Division, has been one of the most-requested publications and is available now only on-line. Staff recommends updating the report and printing new copies that would be made available to all legislators.