

State-Tribal Relations Committee

Revised 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

Visits to Reservations -- 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 in October. Based on the committee's vote at its June 15 meeting, a second reservation visit will be requested from the Flathead Reservation in June. Sen. Joe Tropila requested that the committee consider visiting the Little Shell tribe in Great Falls. If possible, the committee will arrange one meeting in Great Falls.

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

Proposed meeting schedule:

- **Week of October 15** -- Tentatively the committee will meet October 16-17 with executive, legislative, and judicial leaders of the Crow Reservation. One-and-a-half days will be at the Crow Reservation, with one-half day being a meeting of the State-Tribal Relations Committee. The other half day will involve a visit at the Women's Prison in Billings. We will try to get a representative of the National Indian Gaming Commission to attend the State-Tribal Relations Committee meeting. Also, this meeting (or a later one) may include a discussion about disaster assistance and followup recommendations from the spring floods.
- **January 16-17, 2008** -- Two-day meeting in Helena involving followup on enacted legislation or other concerns, including:
 - ▶ use of quotas by law enforcement;
 - ▶ concerns about racial profiling;
 - ▶ implementation of a Medicaid eligibility pilot project and other Medicaid-related programs;
 - ▶ water compacts between tribes and the state and between the tribes and Congress;
 - ▶ implementation of Indian Education for All;
 - ▶ financial assistance for nonbeneficiary students at tribal colleges;
 - ▶ efforts to address the dropout or noncompletion rates of Indian students;
 - ▶ issues related to gambling on reservations;
 - ▶ the use of economic development funds on reservations and economic assistance programs;
 - ▶ sales of articles falsely claimed as made by Montana Indians;
 - ▶ disaster assistance guidelines as they impact reservations; and
 - ▶ a report on the training of state personnel on Indian issues (House Bill 105).Tribal leaders will be invited to this meeting. The goal of the meeting is to review implementation and determine what revisions or options might be included in new legislation. Propose committee bill drafts for 2009 session.
- **April 25** -- Great Falls -- meet with Little Shell tribal officials. Include a separate State-Tribal Relations Committee meeting on social and economic issues, including followup to corrections issues and followup on Zortman/Landusky reclamation work. Review bill drafts for 2009 session.
- **June 2008** (dates to be determined) -- Visit Flathead Reservation. Separate State-Tribal Relations meeting would include discussions related to fee lands within the boundaries of Indian reservations and the role of reservations. Revise bill drafts for 2009 session.
- **August 21** - Vote on whether to introduce committee-sponsored legislation. Wrap up interim activities.
Total of 8 meeting days, which is within the committee's budget.

Member Issues

Among issues that members have suggested 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;
- sales of items falsely claimed as being made by Montana or other Indians;
- guidelines for disaster assistance and how these impact reservations;
- 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.

Other Activities

The Governor's Office is working with the National Conference of State Legislatures and the National Native American Caucus on a September 28-29, 2007, meeting in Helena. Information on that meeting will be made available closer to the event.

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