

1 HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 47

2 INTRODUCED BY S. GIST, D. HARVEY

3
4 A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF
5 MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENTITY COOPERATION AND
6 CONSOLIDATION; AND REQUESTING THAT THE FINAL RESULTS OF THE STUDY BE REPORTED TO
7 THE 70TH LEGISLATURE.
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9 WHEREAS, local government entities, including county, municipal, and consolidated governments, but
10 also a variety of special districts, including but not limited to fire districts, water and sewer districts, road
11 improvement districts, housing authority districts, hospital districts, weed management districts, airport authority
12 districts, irrigation districts, and other miscellaneous districts, are the government units that most closely and
13 directly serve the citizens of Montana; and

14 WHEREAS, in addition to the various districts, each county, municipality, and consolidated local
15 government is often organized into departments, each with a duty to serve the citizens of Montana and deliver
16 effective service; and

17 WHEREAS, a majority of local government entities and departments cooperate well and have taken
18 effective steps to meet the needs of their constituents; however, multiple cases exist that demonstrate a lack of
19 cooperation, unnecessary conflict, or otherwise inefficient and ineffective government; and

20 WHEREAS, the changing demographics of Montana also pose a unique challenge for some areas to
21 continue to provide effective service, especially government entities such as fire departments, fire districts, and
22 fire service areas and other emergency and disaster response entities who have experienced population growth
23 or other changes to the communities they serve; and

24 WHEREAS, reviewing the statutory framework for local government entities and determining if
25 additional tools are needed for those who are experiencing challenges will benefit all citizens of Montana who
26 deserve a functional, effective, and fiscally responsible government.
27

28 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF

1 THE STATE OF MONTANA:

2 That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee or statutory
3 committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, or direct sufficient staff resources to:

4 (1) identify areas of local government that may benefit from more intergovernmental cooperation or
5 strategies to improve communication, cooperation, and mutual benefit;

6 (2) review current methods of intergovernmental cooperation available to local government entities
7 and analyze the effectiveness and efficiency of current methods;

8 (3) examine methods or policies used in other states that have been demonstrated to aid in
9 intergovernmental cooperation and determine if the methods or policies may be appropriate for Montana;

10 (4) identify and analyze areas of local government that may benefit from consolidation, including
11 consideration of methods for withdrawal or dissolution if local government entities choose to consolidate; and

12 (5) analyze the fiscal impacts of increased cooperation or consolidation to both local government
13 entities and the state, including a review of current costs of operation and whether increased cooperation or
14 consolidation measures may reduce those costs.

15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the committee engage appropriate stakeholders, including but not
16 limited to local government officials and employees, the Montana Association of Counties, the Montana League
17 of Cities and Towns, and the Montana State University Local Government Center.

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the committee make reasonable attempts to receive input from
19 individual members of local government entities being investigated and take comment from all parties involved
20 in the event the committee discovers a lack of communication, cooperation, or general government
21 effectiveness.

22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the study is assigned to staff, any findings or conclusions be
23 presented to and reviewed by an appropriate committee designated by the Legislative Council.

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review
25 requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2026.

26 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions,
27 comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 70th Legislature.

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