

1 WHEREAS, community-scale risk reduction in the form of defensible space around homes, widespread
2 use of wildfire-resistant building materials, and thoughtful planning provide a necessary defense against
3 exacerbating the hazards and risks of wildfires that enter the urban landscape; and

4 WHEREAS, thoughtful risk reduction is affordable, cost-effective and necessary in order to reduce the
5 risk of wildfire damage to Montana communities, help protect firefighters, and offer the potential to improve
6 housing affordability by reducing insurance premiums; and

7 WHEREAS, far-sighted community planning has been shown to provide mutual benefits not only to the
8 state's infrastructure but also to the unique outdoor values that Montanans cherish and rely on to support our
9 local economies, our hunting and fishing traditions, and our time-honored way of life.

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11 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF
12 THE STATE OF MONTANA:

13 That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee or statutory
14 committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, to examine:

15 (1) the scope of wildfire impacts on communities, including:

16 (a) the prevalence of wildfires' worsening impacts on population centers in the 21st century;

17 (b) the economic, social, and ecological costs of fires in the wildland-urban interface, including how
18 rising costs impact community resilience; and

19 (c) the costs and benefits of postfire rehabilitation and recovery versus prefire home hardening
20 and community resilience through planning;

21 (2) the role of wildfire-focused land use planning in supporting effective wildfire response,
22 including:

23 (a) the role of building materials and nonvegetated buffers, also known as defensible space, in fire
24 spread, speed, and intensity, both on an individual property and on a community-wide scale; and

25 (b) the benefits of maintaining open routes of ingress and egress, water availability, maintained
26 open space buffers, and other innovative land management concepts to improve public safety and reduce the
27 impacts of wildfire on property and communities;

28 (3) the current legal and policy framework regarding wildfire resilience in Montana, specifically:

- 1 (a) the barriers to widespread adoption of the state's existing laws and regulations; and
- 2 (b) the factors that reduce the efficacy of the existing framework;
- 3 (4) solutions that can alleviate risk in Montana, including examples of:
- 4 (a) how to incentivize action at the community level, including tax incentives, cost-share programs,
- 5 grant programs, and other pathways to ease property owners' burden; and
- 6 (b) effective statewide regulation of building materials, development patterns, landscaping
- 7 guidelines, and vegetation management in the wildland-urban interface, including:
- 8 (i) how the state can allow local jurisdictions to adopt more robust codes and standards than the
- 9 state baseline that will allow high-hazard communities to protect homes, businesses, and their economies while
- 10 not placing an onerous burden on lower-hazard communities;
- 11 (ii) the role of state agencies in effectively acting as liaisons and experts to municipal government
- 12 in enacting and enforcing statewide wildfire resilience codes;
- 13 (iii) the development of hazard and risk maps that can inform property owners and local
- 14 governments where areas of higher or lower hazard exist; and
- 15 (iv) solutions that effectively balance oversight and enforcement with on-the-ground conditions and
- 16 flexibility for property owners.

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review

18 requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2026.

19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions,

20 comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 70th Legislature.

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