_____ JOINT RESOLUTION NO. _____

INTRODUCED BY _____
(Primary Sponsor)

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY EXAMINING THE LONG-TERM FUNDING, EXPANSION, AND STABILITY OF THE BLOCK MANAGEMENT PROGRAM; AND REQUIRING THAT THE FINAL RESULTS OF THE STUDY BE REPORTED TO THE 70TH LEGISLATURE.

WHEREAS, the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Park's Block Management Program is Montana's premier public hunting access program and is broadly and strongly supported by both resident and nonresident hunters; and

WHEREAS, maintaining the Block Management Program is essential to providing high-quality hunting opportunities for many hunters and retaining the support of landowners across the state who are enrolled in the program; and

WHEREAS, the utilization of Block Management areas has steadily increased from 490,000 hunter days in 2010 to 638,000 hunter days in 2023 even as the total acreage enrolled in the Block Management Program has declined from 8.5 million acres in 2010 to 6.8 million acres in 2023; and

WHEREAS, the total cost of the program has significantly increased from $4.7 million in 2010 to $11.5 million in 2023.

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

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

(1) examine the current sources of funding for the Block Management Program and DETERMINE whether these funding sources will be sustainable in future years;

(2) examine alternative sources of funding to ensure the sustainability of the Block Management Program;

(3) examine current caps on compensation to landowners and whether they should be increased AND WHEN;

(4) identify strategies to retain and expand landowner participation in the BLOCK MANAGEMENT PROGRAM;

(5) identify strategies to expand both the total acreage and number of landowners participating in the Block Management Program; and

(6) identify, develop, and propose any necessary legislation to sustain and expand the Block Management Program.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the interim committee or statutory committee shall consult with relevant stakeholders, including representatives from the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, hunters, and landowners, to gather comprehensive information and diverse perspectives.

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

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

- END -