

1 SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 4

2 INTRODUCED BY J. KEANE

3 BY REQUEST OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL

4

5 A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF
6 MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY OF WAYS TO IMPROVE THE MARKETING, MANAGEMENT,
7 OPERATION, MAINTENANCE, AND FUNDING OF STATE-OWNED SITES AT VIRGINIA CITY, NEVADA CITY,
8 AND REEDER'S ALLEY IN HELENA.

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10 WHEREAS, the state-owned historic sites at Virginia City and Nevada City are among the most valuable
11 and fascinating historic sites in Montana and are a tremendous resource for all residents, families, schools, and
12 surrounding communities and for Montana's economy; and

13 WHEREAS, the proximity of Virginia City and Nevada City to Yellowstone National Park make them ripe
14 to capitalize on the millions of visitors that travel to or through the area each year; and

15 WHEREAS, the 1997 Legislature authorized the purchase of these properties in Virginia City and Nevada
16 City, including 248 buildings, 160 acres, and over 1 million artifacts for \$6.5 million dollars; and

17 WHEREAS, the 1997 Legislature stipulated that the state-owned sites in Virginia City and Nevada City
18 must be managed to become self-sufficient and profitable and that no general fund money is to be given to them
19 in the future; and

20 WHEREAS, in subsequent sessions, the Legislature has not altered that statutory directive; and

21 WHEREAS, the Montana Heritage Preservation and Development Commission, which manages the sites
22 along with Reeder's Alley in Helena, has struggled to achieve that goal of self-sufficiency for many reasons,
23 including extensive preservation, stabilization, and maintenance needs; and

24 WHEREAS, the Commission employs only two full-time maintenance workers and the Commission's
25 repair and maintenance budget, as approved by the 2011 Legislature, was just \$23,890 for fiscal years 2012 and
26 2013; and

27 WHEREAS, long-range building program money was not appropriated to the Commission by the 2011
28 Legislature; and

29 WHEREAS, the Commission reorganized in August 2011 due to a \$400,000 budget shortfall, resulting
30 in a reduction in force of five FTE; and

1 WHEREAS, the Commission, as part of that reorganization, is placing a greater emphasis on business
2 planning and has hired a full-time business development manager; and

3 WHEREAS, the Legislative Environmental Quality Council reviewed the Commission and its work as part
4 of the House Joint Resolution No. 32 study of state parks and outdoor recreation and heritage resource programs
5 during the 2011-2012 interim; and

6 WHEREAS, the Council found much opportunity and greater need for state support to improve the
7 Commission's marketing, operation, preservation, and maintenance of Virginia City, Nevada City, and Reeder's
8 Alley; and

9 WHEREAS, the Council recognizes the changes and improvements that are being made under the
10 Commission's new organizational structure and business plan; and

11 WHEREAS, the Council feels that while integrating the administration of Virginia City, Nevada City, and
12 Reeder's Alley with other recreational and heritage resources, including state parks, might be desirable due to
13 seemingly natural alliances between their missions, operations, and resource needs, it does not seem appropriate
14 to do so at this time.

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

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

20 (1) provide continued oversight of the Montana Heritage Preservation and Development Commission
21 and its management and operation of state-owned sites at Virginia City, Nevada City, and Reeder's Alley;

22 (2) review the implementation and impacts of the Commission's restructuring and newly adopted
23 business plan;

24 (3) review in greater detail the myriad properties and artifacts the state purchased at Virginia City and
25 Nevada City to determine whether the statutory mission for the sites should be redefined or whether
26 recommendations should be made regarding the deaccession of any properties or artifacts;

27 (4) identify overall preservation needs at Virginia City, Nevada City, and Reeder's Alley and make
28 recommendations regarding the scale and scope of those efforts based on available resources;

29 (5) review marketing efforts and identify other ways to make Virginia City, Nevada City, and Reeder's
30 Alley better known to residents and nonresidents alike;

1 (6) review the Commission's funding and revenue and make recommendations for improving overall
2 finances, especially funding for preservation and maintenance work;

3 (7) identify opportunities to integrate and better coordinate the administration of state-owned sites at
4 Virginia City, Nevada City, and Reeder's Alley with other recreational and heritage resources, including state
5 parks; and

6 (8) evaluate the makeup of the Commission and whether its membership, powers, and duties should
7 be restructured or redefined, including whether some duties should be transferred to the Department of
8 Commerce, to which the Commission is attached.

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

11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review
12 requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2014.

13 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions,
14 comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 64th Legislature.

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