



A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENTITY COOPERATION AND CONSOLIDATION; AND REQUESTING THAT THE FINAL RESULTS OF THE STUDY BE REPORTED TO THE 70TH LEGISLATURE.

WHEREAS, local government entities, including county, municipal, and consolidated governments, but also a variety of special districts, including but not limited to fire districts, water and sewer districts, road improvement districts, housing authority districts, hospital districts, weed management districts, airport authority districts, irrigation districts, and other miscellaneous districts, are the government units that most closely and directly serve the citizens of Montana; and

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

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

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

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

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, or direct sufficient staff resources to:

- (1) identify areas of local government that may benefit from more intergovernmental cooperation or strategies to improve communication, cooperation, and mutual benefit;
- (2) review current methods of intergovernmental cooperation available to local government entities and analyze the effectiveness and efficiency of current methods;
- (3) examine methods or policies used in other states that have been demonstrated to aid in intergovernmental cooperation and determine if the methods or policies may be appropriate for Montana;
- (4) identify and analyze areas of local government that may benefit from consolidation, including consideration of methods for withdrawal or dissolution if local government entities choose to consolidate; and
- (5) analyze the fiscal impacts of increased cooperation or consolidation to both local government entities and the state, including a review of current costs of operation and whether increased cooperation or consolidation measures may reduce those costs.

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

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

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

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 -

I hereby certify that the within bill,
HJ 47, originated in the House.

Chief Clerk of the House

Speaker of the House

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2025.

President of the Senate

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2025.

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 47

INTRODUCED BY S. GIST, D. HARVEY

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