

MINUTES

MONTANA SENATE
51st LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH

Call to Order: By Senator Tom Hager, on Tuesday, April 18, 1989, at 11:30 A. M. at Room 415 of the State Capitol.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: All members of the Committee were present. Senator Tom Hager, Chairman, Senator Tom Rasmussen, Vice Chairman, Senator Matt Himsl, Senator Bill Norman, Senator Harry "Doc" McLane, and Senator Bob Pipinich.

Members Excused: No members were excused.

Members Absent: Senator J.D. Lynch was absent.

Staff Present: Tom Gomez, Legislative Council Analyst.

Announcements/Discussion: There were no announcements or discussion.

HEARING ON HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 40

Presentation and Opening Statement by Sponsor:

Representative Wilbur Spring, House District 77, presented the opening statement for Dorothy Bradley, sponsor of the resolution. Representative Spring stated the resolution requests an interim study on Alzheimer's disease and requires a report of the findings of the study to be reported to the 52nd Legislature.

Mr. Spring stated Alzheimer's disease is a devastating health condition that destroys vital brains cells, causes progressive loss of memory and mental functions, and eventually robs its victims of the ability to speak and recognize close friends and relatives. Alzheimer's disease is the fourth leading cause of death among the elderly and is believed to affect approximately 10% of all persons over 65 years of age and more than 20% of all persons over the age of 80. Alzheimer's disease imposes serious financial, social, and emotional hardships upon the families of its victims and has a significant impact on the state Medicaid budget. At this time there is no known cause or cure for Alzheimer's disease and early and accurate diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease is crucial because a significant number

of persons who are thought to be afflicted with the disease actually suffer from depression or other treatable disorders.

List of Testifying Proponents and What Group they Represent:

There were no proponents.

List of Testifying Opponents and What Group They Represent:

There were no opponents.

Testimony:

There was no testimony.

Questions From Committee Members:

Senator Himsl stated he would like to preface his remarks, by saying his sister suffered from Alzheimer's disease for ten year. The disease is disabling. Senator Himsl asked what can the Legislature do about Alzheimer's disease in the way of research. Mayo's and Virginia Mason hospitals have research departments. The Kalispell Lutheran Hospital is setting up a wing to aid Alzheimer's victims. The program is very progressive. Montana does not have the capacity to make a scientific conclusion. Representative Spring stated his involvement was personal. His wife passed away, having suffered from Alzheimer's disease.

Senator Hager asked Tom Gomez to talk about what the other states are doing concerning the study of Alzheimer's disease. Gomez stated he researched the disease for Dorothy Bradley. Gomez stated he is aware numerous states have completed research. New Hampshire and Indiana watched for the continuation of services that are available to help the Alzheimer's victims. While there is nothing to do to prevent the inevitable, the study insured the quality of life was continued. Legislation coordinated programs to better assist Alzheimer's victims. Special programs screened people for Alzheimer's disease. Many people have other diseases, not Alzheimer's, so the screening programs are successful. Congress currently established a study commission on Alzheimer's disease. Representative Bradley had HJR 40 drafted to be broad in order to educate the public and Legislature concerning the special problems of Alzheimer's disease.

Senator Himsl stated the Kalispell hospital, as all Alzheimer's institutions, find it hard to identify the disease. Scientists are not sure what the disease is, but speculate it is the nerve endings in the brain becoming

frayed. Autopsies can not identify the disease. Insurance programs do not cover Alzheimer's claims.

Representative Spring stated his wife was diagnosed, not as Alzheimer's, but with an organic dimension. There are fifteen different dimension of the deterioration of the brain. There are two treatable, although as of July, there are now four treatable dimensions. Vitamin B 1 deficiency and Thyroid are two of the treatable dimension. The doctors said Mrs. Spring's diagnosis was not a classic Alzheimer's diagnosis.

Senator Pipinich stated he was in favor of the resolution. Senator Pipinich related the recent death of his father was attributed to Alzheimer's disease. Senator Pipinich asked if this proposal is going to cost money. The resolution states services will be offered to aid the victims of Alzheimer's disease and their families. Will the state become involved in the home environment in order to help family members while they go through the ordeal of dealing with the Alzheimer's patient. Representative Spring stated Representative Bradley is better versed on the subject. Senator Pipinich stated the resolution is being heard at a time when the budget crunch is very crucial. Perhaps, if the resolution was heard earlier, the legislation would have passed.

Senator Hims1 stated the Legislative Council will have the Legislators pick the resolutions to be studied. Three resolutions will be chosen for study during the interim.

Representative Spring stated the resolution is a worthy project.

Senator Rasmussen commented he agreed with the testimony. There are many other worthy needs that could also be funded.

Closing by Sponsor:

Representative Spring closed by saying the resolution is worthy, but stated he realizes there is a great need for study in many medical areas.

DISPOSITION OF HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 40

Recommendation and Vote:

Senator McLane moved to table HJR 40. The motion passed. Senator Pipinich voted NO.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment At: The meeting was adjourned at 11:54 a.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Tom Hager", written over a horizontal line.

Senator Tom Hager, Chairman

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