

MINUTES

MONTANA SENATE 52nd LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION

COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Call to Order: By Chairman Esther Bengtson, on April 11, 1991,
at 3:10 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Esther Bengtson, Chairman (D)
Eleanor Vaughn, Vice Chairman (D)
Thomas Beck (R)
Dorothy Eck (D)
H.W. Hammond (R)
Ethel Harding (R)
John Jr. Kennedy (D)
Gene Thayer (R)
Mignon Waterman (D)

Members Excused: none

Staff Present: Connie Erickson (Legislative Council).

Please Note: These are summary minutes. Testimony and
discussion are paraphrased and condensed.

Announcements/Discussion: This is the last meeting of Senate
Local Government.

HEARING ON HJR-45

Presentation and Opening Statement by Sponsor: Senator Gene Thayer, District 19, presented HJR-45 for Representative Diana Wyatt who was detained in the House. Senator Thayer this resolution recognizes the Montana Local Government Policy Council (MLGPC) that was formed one year ago with a grant from the Northwest Area Foundation. There are members from the Senate and the House, a member of the Department of Commerce, exofficio members from MACo and MLCT. Senator Thayer and Senator Pinsoneault were appointed by past President Galt to sit on this council. The MLGPC meets about every month or two depending on what is going on. The first meeting the council prioritized the problems facing local governments. Montana State University has researchers investigate these problems, and then present papers containing their research. These research papers will be distributed to all the cities, towns, and counties throughout Montana. There is a lot of valuable work being done. At one of the recent meetings, it was decided that recognition needed to be

made to the Northwest Area Foundation for the grant that help start the council. There is no money being appropriated by the Legislature to the council. The MLGPC is currently supported by the Northwest Area Foundation grant. HJR-45 is the recognition of the Northwest Area Foundation for their contribution to helping organize the Montana Local Government Policy Council. This is a hard working council, a lot of good work and information will come from it.

Proponents' Testimony: Representative Diana Wyatt, District 37, spoke as a proponent of HJR-45. The Montana Local Government Policy Council out of Bozeman, is using non-profit funds, and this resolution asks the Legislature to continue to advocate for their existence. The information they supply to the Legislature and other local governments is very valuable and important to the legislative process. She asked for the committee's support of this resolution.

Judy Mathre, Associate Director, Local Government Center at Montana State University, said she supported HJR-45. She detailed the MLGPC. It was funded by a grant from the Northwest Area Foundation, and that grant was received approximately one year ago. One of the grant goals was to create a Local Government Policy Council. The makeup of the Council is: Executive Branch members, Chuck Brook (Department of Commerce Chair) and Kathy Furry (Travel Coordinator), Senators Thayer and Pinsoneault, Representatives Wyatt and Jim Rice. There are 3 county members and 3 from cities, plus 2 citizen at large members. The members at large are Dennis Burr from MONTAX, and Mae Nan Ellingson, Attorney, Dorsey Whitney. The purpose of the MLGPC is to identify issues of concern to local government, and then do research on these issues, and report the findings. Last fall the Council identified four issues that they felt were of great importance to local government. Reports were prepared on : #1 Solid waste, #2 intergovernmental cooperation, #3 county compensation, #4 infrastructure feasibility. The reports on these issues were done the first of February and sent to the Legislature. What the Council hopes to do is to continue the process. There is grant funding for three years. We hope to go through the process again and identify more issues of concern to local governments and continue to research them. Hopefully the reports can be out prior to the next Legislative session, so the reports can be used by the Legislators before they are buried with things to read.

Gordon Morris, Executive Director, Montana Association of Counties (MACo) said he was pleased to rise in support of HJR-45. He is an exofficio member of the Council. The MLGPC is an effort that began several sessions ago to establish a Montana equivalent of the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations. The bill did not fair well in the last session. This is another way to accomplish the same thing. Most Legislators have received

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some of the compiled information of the MLGPC. One of the reports that was important to the MACo legislation was the "Salary Compensation Study". He asked the committee to Concur in HJR-45.

Alec Hanson, Montana League of Cities and Towns (MLCT) said the organization supports HJR-45. This council is a way to take a quality, in-depth study of the pressing issues facing cities and counties at this time in Montana. The Council is not a way to develop information to influence a legislator. He is more interested in trying to look at issues like consolidation, service consolidation, and those things that local governments can do on their own without legislative approval to make local governments more efficient and effective. There are a lot of things to be done to maximize local government management authority. The knowledge should be shared to help all communities. If every time there is a problem that has to be addressed by the Legislature it slows down the process. He would like to see the MLGPC develop some ideas and then share this information with the cities and counties. The University's involvement means the access to some very well prepared information. The Taxation Committee used some of this information recently. A bill for public works financing was heard, and some information developed under the auspices of the council was shared with the committee. The information was particularly helpful. It covered what a loan interest loan is, how much money can be saved, and translated it down to what the interest rate at various level would mean to the cost per household in savings for a particular utility. These type of information is really important. Many times in the Legislature makes decisions in a hurry, and many times the information is not good to base a decision on. The MLGPC is in place, and in regards to local government concerns, they will help provide high quality, reliable, pertinent information. This is a critical step, and for that reason he asked the committee to concur in HJR-45. The MLGPC has the ability to make all of our jobs easier, and to give us a chance to do our jobs better.

Opponents' Testimony: none

Questions From Committee Members:

Senator Bengtson asked if the MLGPC plans to be an ad hoc advisory group to local government study commissions if they are asked? Mr. Hanson said the next cycle of study commissions would certainly be looked at a legitimate function of the MLGPC to provide information to them. The MLGPC could provide information on the various alternatives under the Montana Local Government Review Statute.

Senator Hammond asked Mr. Hanson if he was on the MLGPC? Mr.

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Hanson said he was an exofficio member from MLCT. Senator Hammond asked him if he thought the group worked hard? Mr. Hanson said yes he did think the group worked hard, and he added that with Mae Nan Ellingson as a member, there is a guarantee that hard work will be done.


Closing by Sponsor: Representative Wyatt closed by apologizing for being late. She said she appreciated the committee's consideration of HJR-45, and she hoped they would concur in the resolution.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HJR-45

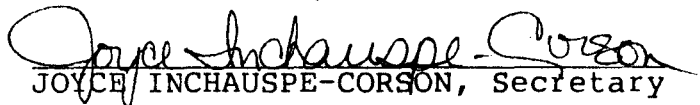
Motion: Senator Thayer moved to Concur in HJR-45. The motion passed unanimously. Senator Thayer will carry HJR-45.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment At: 3:30 p.m.



ESTHER BENGTSON, Chairman



JOYCE INCHAUSPE-CORSON, Secretary

EB/jic

DATE April 11, 1991

COMMITTEE ON Senate Local Government

VISITORS' REGISTER

[illegible]

(Please leave prepared statement with Secretary)

ROLL CALL

SENATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

DATE 4-11-91

52 LEGISLATIVE SESSION _____

NAME	PRESENT	ABSENT	EXCUSED
Senator Beck	X		
Senator Bengtson	X		
Senator Eck	X		
Senator Hammond	X		
Senator Harding	X		
Senator Kennedy	X		
Senator Thayer	X		
Senator Vaughn	X		
Senator Waterman	X		

Each day attach to minutes.

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT

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MR. PRESIDENT:

We, your committee on Local Government, having had under consideration House Joint Resolution No. 45 (third reading copy - blue), respectfully report that House Joint Resolution No. 45 be concurred in.

Respectfully,
Esther C. Bondron, Chairman

VB 4/11
And. Coord.

SR 4/11 4:15
Sec. of Senate