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As of: June 29, 2012 (10:36am)

LC9010

**** Joint Resolution No. ****

Introduced By *****

By Request of the Environmental Quality Council

A Joint Resolution of the Senate and the House of Representatives of the State of Montana requesting an interim study of ways to improve the marketing, management, operation, maintenance, and funding of state-owned sites at Virginia City and Nevada City.

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

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

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

WHEREAS, the 1997 legislature stipulated that the state-owned sites in Virginia City and Nevada City must be managed to become self-sufficient and profitable and that no general fund monies are to be given to them in the future; and

WHEREAS, subsequent legislatures have not altered that

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statutory directive; and

WHEREAS, the Montana heritage preservation and development commission, which manages the sites, has struggled to achieve that goal of self-sufficiency for many reasons, including extensive preservation, stabilization, and maintenance needs; and

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

WHEREAS, long range building program monies were not appropriated to the commission by the 2011 Legislature; and

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

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

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

WHEREAS, the council found much opportunity and greater need for state support to improve the commission's marketing, operation, preservation, and maintenance of Virginia City and Nevada City; and

WHEREAS, the council recognizes the changes and improvements that are being made under the commission's new organizational

structure and business plan; and

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

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 5-5-217, MCA, or direct sufficient staff resources to:

(1) provide continued oversight of the Montana heritage preservation and development commission and its management and operation of state-owned sites at Virginia City and Nevada City;

(2) review the implementation and impacts of the commission's restructuring and newly-adopted business plan;

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

(4) identify overall preservation needs at Virginia City and Nevada City and make recommendations regarding the scale and scope of those efforts based on available resources;

(5) review marketing efforts and identify other ways to make

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Virginia City and Nevada City better known to residents and nonresidents alike;

(6) review the commission's funding and revenues and make recommendations for improving overall finances, especially funding for preservation and maintenance work;

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

(8) evaluate the makeup of the commission and whether its membership, powers, and duties should be restructured or redefined, including whether some duties should be transferred to the department of commerce to which the commission is attached.

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, 2014.

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 64th Legislature.

- END -

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