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As of: July 22, 2004 (1:42pm)

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

Introduced By *****

By Request of the Education and Local Government Interim
Committee

A Joint Resolution of the Senate and the House of Representatives of the State of Montana urging the Legislature to support the efforts of the Board of Regents of Higher Education and the Montana University System to strengthen the state's economy by implementing the policy recommendations identified in the document entitled "Shared Leadership for a Stronger Montana Economy".

WHEREAS, economic development in Montana has many advocates, including the Governor, state Legislature, Congressional Delegation, educators, and business community; and

WHEREAS, on January 15, 2004, the Board of Regents of Higher Education unanimously approved a plan to identify those areas in which the Montana University System can take a more active role in partnering with the Governor's Office and the Legislature to advance the state's economy; and

WHEREAS, upon approval of the Legislative Council and under the direction of the Education and Local Government Interim Committee, the Postsecondary Education Policy and Budget Subcommittee staff became part of an ad hoc working group with the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education and the Governor's Office to create a document entitled "Shared

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Leadership for a Stronger Montana Economy", which developed an action plan to identify and prioritize key initiatives in which the Montana University System has core competencies and credible expertise and that represent the best opportunities for the University System to play a more prominent partnership role in driving economic development in the state; and

WHEREAS, after identifying six key initiatives, the working group established a leadership group composed of leaders from the Congressional Delegation, the Legislative and Executive Branches, education, and representatives from local government and private business, followed by the formation of a project team to conduct policy research and develop action plans for each initiative; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Regents' economic development project team met February 25, 2004, to modify or expand the six identified initiatives and to begin identifying specific teams of individuals to develop action plans and strategies for implementing each initiative; and

WHEREAS, on March 24, 2004, action plans and strategies for the six identified initiatives were presented to a joint meeting of the Board of Regents and the Postsecondary Education Policy and Budget Subcommittee for consideration and approval; and

WHEREAS, on July 7, 2004, the Board of Regents and the Postsecondary Education Policy and Budget Subcommittee reviewed the six initiatives and, based on time and available resources, unanimously selected as top priorities for immediate implementation:

- (1) improving workforce training and education by

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strengthening Montana's 2-year post-secondary institutions' efforts to respond to the needs of business and industry in high-demand occupational areas critical to the state's economic vitality, by creating a career pathways system for delivering occupational education and training, and by creating a data management system for workforce development;

(2) promoting and enhancing access to postsecondary education by implementing programs that promote the value of and remove barriers to postsecondary education for Montana's citizens; and

(3) enhancing distance learning by centralizing and coordinating online delivery of education across the entire Montana University System; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Regents and the Postsecondary Education Policy and Budget Subcommittee recognized the remaining three initiatives as extremely valuable and urged the Board of Regents to continue its efforts long-term to:

(1) expand partnerships between the Montana University System and Montana businesses by creating a state level office, independent of politics and individual campuses, to coordinate statewide resources and identify existing business that could benefit from university technology partnerships or other business support resources;

(2) collaborate with the state, local, and, where appropriate, tribal governments to provide a means for the University System to become more engaged in resolving identified problems; and

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(3) establish a partnership between the Department of Commerce, Montana Travel Promotion Division of the Department of Commerce, and the Montana University System to increase Montana University System's promotion to out-of-state students and alumni.

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

(1) That the Legislature continue to support the efforts of the Board of Regents of Higher Education and the Montana University System to partner with the Legislative and Executive Branches, local and tribal governments, and the private sector to strengthen the state's economy by implementing the six initiatives identified and described in the document entitled "Shared Leadership for a Stronger Montana Economy".

(2) That a copy of this resolution be sent by the Secretary of State to the Board of Regents of the Montana University System, to the Montana Association of Counties, to the Montana League of Cities and Towns, and to each tribal government located on the seven Montana reservations and to the Little Shell band of Chippewa.

- END -

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