

MINUTES
SENATE RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, March 11, 2020

TIME: 1:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Heider, Vice Chairman Brackett, Senators Bair, Johnson, Mortimer, Patrick, Guthrie, Stennett, and Jordan

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None

NOTE: The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

CONVENED: **Chairman Heider** called the meeting of the Senate Resources and Environment Committee (Committee) to order at 1:04 p.m.

PAGE GRADUATION: **Chairman Heider** said a farewell to the Committee's Page, Lexi Rich, and asked her what her plans were once the session was over. **Ms. Rich** spoke of her future education plans. She further explained her experience being a Page and what she enjoyed most was that everyone was polite, respectful, and that the Senators were all friends, even if they disagreed.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Vice Chairman Brackett** moved to approve the Minutes of March 4, 2020. **Senator Bair** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

HJM 15 House Joint Memorial (HJM) by House Ways and Means Committee; supporting updating the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) rules.

Senator Dan Johnson explained that this joint memorial supports the White House Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) to comprehensively update the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) rules which has not been done since 1978, and to streamline the process. This update to the rules would modernize and clarify the CEQ regulations to facilitate more efficient, effective, and timely NEPA reviews by federal agencies by:

- simplifying regulatory requirements;
- codifying certain guidance and case law relevant to these proposed regulations;
- revising regulations to reflect current technologies and agency practices;
- eliminating obsolete provisions; and
- improving the format and readability of the regulations.

He summarized that the process for preparing an environmental impact statement is taking much longer than CEQ regulations and guidance recommended; and this would also include recommended page limits for the text of proposals. This memorial is asking the Senate and House to support moving vital projects forward in a timely manner.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Stennett** shared her understanding that NEPA was created to give people a voice because industry was not being held accountable for degradations that had occurred and people were getting sick. **Senator Johnson** spoke about the fact that this HJM does not protect industry versus protecting the people NEPA is currently helping. He pointed out that this HJM would clarify the meaning of regulations so the courts can make their decisions based upon sound rules.

Senators Jordan and **Johnson** discussed that the laws apply on federal lands and the Native American tribes have a seat at the table to discuss the regulations. They also discussed how this HJM would not negatively impact energy development and the Clean Water Act.

MOTION: **Senator Bair** moved to send **HJM 15** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Patrick** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**, with **Senators Stennett** and **Jordan** requesting that they be recorded as voting nay. Senator Johnson will carry the bill on the floor.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Heider** adjourned the meeting at 1:26 p.m.

Senator Heider
Chair

Erin Miller
Secretary