



EDUCATION INTERIM COMMITTEE 69th Montana Legislature

SENATE MEMBERS

Daniel Emrich
Sara Novak
Matt Regier
Sue Vinton

HOUSE MEMBERS

Lee Deming
Shelly Fyant
Randyn Gregg
Linda Reksten
Melissa Romano

COMMITTEE STAFF

Pad McCracken - Lead Staff
Laura Sankey Keip - Legal Staff
Rebecca Brown - Research Analyst
Ania Alduenda - Secretary

MINUTES LOG

March 16, 2026
Room 317 & Zoom
Helena, Montana

Minutes logs provide an annotation of the time elapsed between the beginning of a meeting and the time at which a topic is presented or discussed, a motion made, or a vote taken. The time designation may be used to locate the referenced discussion in the video. The minutes log is only a guide to the video of the meeting. The official record of the meeting is the video. Minutes logs can be accessed at <https://committees.legmt.gov> and videos can be accessed at <https://media.legmt.gov>.

For more information, please contact:

The Legislative Services Division at 406-444-3064 for policy committees;
The Legislative Fiscal Division at 406-444-2986 for fiscal committees; or
The Legislative Audit Division at 406-444-3122 for the Legislative Audit Committee.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Rep. Linda Reksten, Presiding Officer (R)
Sen. Sara Novak, Vice Presiding Officer (D)
Rep. Lee Deming (R)
Rep. Shelly Fyant (D)
Sen. Matt Regier (R)
Rep. Melissa Romano (D)
Sen. Sue Vinton (R) - via Zoom

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Sen. Daniel Emrich (R)
Rep. Randyn Gregg (R)

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT:

Pad McCracken, Lead Staff
Laura Sankey Keip, Legal Staff
Rebecca Brown, Research Analyst
Ania Alduenda, Secretary

AGENDA ([Attachment 1](#))

VISITORS' LIST ([Attachment 2](#))

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

10:00:02 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM. The committee secretary took roll.

OPENING REMARKS

10:00:52 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten

10:01:09 Pad McCracken, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

ADMINISTRATIVE RULE REVIEW PROCESS AND COMMITTEE ROLE

10:02:31 Laura Sankey Keip, Legal Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

[EXHIBIT 1](#)

YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY UPDATE

10:06:47 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten

10:07:13 Sarah Music, Coordinated School Health Director, Office of Public Instruction (OPI)

[EXHIBIT 2](#)

Committee Discussion / Questions

10:18:28 Rep. Lee Deming
(See Exhibit 2)

10:18:54 Sarah Music, OPI

10:22:18 Rep. Shelly Fyant

10:26:21 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten

10:26:37 Sarah Music, OPI

10:27:26 Sen. Sue Vinton

10:28:04 Sarah Music, OPI

10:29:21 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 53 STUDY OF SCHOOL SAFETY

Examples of State School Safety Centers – Colorado

10:29:44 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten

10:30:27 Nancy Berg, Director, Montana Safe Schools Center (MSSC)

10:32:52 Christine Harms, Director, Colorado Office of School Safety

[EXHIBIT 3](#)

Committee Discussion / Questions

10:41:43 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten

10:41:58 Christine Harms, Colorado Office of School Safety

10:43:09 Sen. Sue Vinton

10:43:48 Christine Harms, Colorado Office of School Safety

10:45:00 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten

Examples of State School Safety Centers – Utah

10:45:15 Rhett Larsen, School Safety Center Coordinator, Utah School Safety Center

[EXHIBIT 4](#)

Committee Discussion / Questions

- 10:56:39 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten
10:56:57 Rhett Larsen, Utah School Safety Center

Best Practices in State-Level Support for 10 Essential Actions - Committee Discussion

- 11:00:12 Nancy Berg, MSSC
[EXHIBIT 5](#)
11:00:54 Christina Hayes, Associate Director, MSSC
(See Exhibit 5)
11:01:04 Elliot Nelson, Graduate Research Assistant, MSSC
(See Exhibit 5)
11:28:16 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten
11:28:20 Nancy Berg, MSSC
11:29:26 Rep. Lee Deming
11:29:39 Nancy Berg, MSSC
11:31:22 Christina Hayes, MSSC
11:46:41 Sen. Sue Vinton
11:47:04 Nancy Berg, MSSC
11:48:14 Rep. Shelly Fyant
11:48:31 Christina Hayes, MSSC
11:49:36 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten
11:49:51 Christina Hayes, MSSC
11:50:32 Rep. Shelly Fyant
(See Exhibit 5)
11:51:55 Christina Hayes, MSSC

Potential Committee Recommendations - Committee Discussion

- 11:52:48 Nancy Berg, MSSC
[EXHIBIT 6](#)
11:56:54 Vice Presiding Officer Sara Novak
11:57:44 Christina Hayes, MSSC
11:58:49 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten

Public Comment

Written Public Comment ([Attachment 3](#))

- 11:59:09 Rob Watson, Executive Director, School Administrators of Montana (SAM)
12:05:04 Kim Popham, Director, Public Policy and Research, Montana Federation of Public Employees (MFPE)
12:08:18 Cory Rountree, Director, Government Relations, Gaggle
(See Attachment 3)
12:11:15 Sen. Sue Vinton
12:11:36 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten
12:12:03 Dr. Molly Blakely, Superintendent, Hellgate Elementary School District

Committee Discussion / Questions

- 12:14:12 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten
- 12:15:13 Dr. Molly Blakely, Hellgate Elementary School District
- 12:16:08 Rep. Shelly Fyant
- 12:16:27 Dr. Molly Blakely, Hellgate Elementary School District
- 12:18:17 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten
- 12:19:32 Christina Hayes, MSSC
- 12:20:41 Pad McCracken, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
- 12:23:33 Rep. Shelly Fyant
- 12:23:46 Nancy Berg, MSSC
- 12:24:28 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten

- 12:26:26 **Recessed**
- 13:31:11 **Reconvened**

REQUESTED OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION (OPI) UPDATES

Teacher Licensure Report

- 13:31:18 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten
- 13:31:43 Dr. Julie Murgel, Chief Program Officer, OPI
[EXHIBIT 7](#)
- 13:33:18 Rep. Randyn Gregg joined the meeting via zoom.

Committee Discussion / Questions

- 13:49:56 Vice Presiding Officer Sara Novak
- 13:50:27 Dr. Julie Murgel, OPI
- 13:52:44 Rep. Lee Deming
- 13:53:01 Dr. Julie Murgel, OPI
- 13:53:09 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten

Quality Educator Loan Assistance Program

- 13:53:38 Christy Mock-Stutz, Assistant Chief Program Officer, OPI
[EXHIBIT 8](#)

Committee Discussion / Questions

- 13:56:29 Rep. Lee Deming
- 13:56:36 Christy Mock-Stutz, OPI
- 13:56:43 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten

School Nutrition Report

- 13:57:22 Christine Emerson, Director, School Nutrition Programs, OPI
[EXHIBIT 9](#)

Committee Discussion / Questions

- 14:02:28 Rep. Shelly Fyant

14:03:04 Christine Emerson, OPI
14:04:56 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten
14:05:07 Christine Emerson, OPI
14:08:34 Rep. Lee Deming
14:08:43 Christine Emerson, OPI
14:09:33 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten

Seal of Civics Literacy

14:09:54 Tyler Capece, Assistant Deputy Superintendent, OPI
[EXHIBIT 10](#)

Committee Discussion / Questions

14:16:29 Rep. Randyn Gregg
14:16:49 Tyler Capece, OPI
14:17:36 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten

POSSIBLE CLEAN-UP BILLS FOR THE COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER

14:17:59 Pad McCracken, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
[EXHIBIT 11](#)
14:19:13 Susie Hedalen, Superintendent, Office of Public Instruction (OPI)

Committee Discussion / Questions

14:20:03 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten
14:20:49 Supt. Susie Hedalen, OPI
14:22:07 Sen. Sue Vinton
14:22:29 Supt. Susie Hedalen, OPI
14:22:47 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten
14:23:26 Vice Presiding Officer Sara Novak
14:23:49 Supt. Susie Hedalen, OPI
14:24:08 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten
14:24:23 Supt. Susie Hedalen, OPI
14:24:44 Vice Presiding Officer Sara Novak
14:26:01 Supt. Susie Hedalen, OPI
14:29:33 Pad McCracken, LSD
(See Exhibit 11)
14:30:35 Paul Taylor, Budget Analyst, OPI
14:32:59 Sen. Matt Regier
14:33:11 Pad McCracken, LSD
14:34:04 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten
14:34:26 Paul Taylor, OPI
14:34:33 Pad McCracken, LSD

UPDATE ON TEACHER REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

14:39:07 Crystal Armstrong, Administrator, Workforce Services Division, Montana
Department of Labor and Industry (DLI)
[EXHIBIT 12](#)

Committee Discussion / Questions

14:58:32 Rep. Melissa Romano
14:59:14 Crystal Armstrong, DLI
15:01:43 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten
15:02:08 Crystal Armstrong, DLI

OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF THE SCHOOL FUNDING INTERIM COMMISSION (SFIC) PHASE I REPORT

What We Heard and What It Means for Montana's Education System

15:03:07 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten
15:03:43 Janice Case, Regional Director – West, National Center for Education and the
Economy (NCEE)
[EXHIBIT 13](#)
15:04:16 Pad McCracken, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
[EXHIBIT 14](#)
[EXHIBIT 15](#)
15:10:53 Matt Bachand, Senior Policy Designer, NCEE

Presentation and Committee Discussion / Questions

15:18:26 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten
15:19:47 Matt Bachand, NCEE
15:20:37 Janice Case, NCEE
15:22:27 Pad McCracken, LSD
15:23:01 Matt Bachand, NCEE
15:25:57 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten
15:26:04 Matt Bachand, NCEE
15:26:29 Janice Case, NCEE
15:27:48 Rep. Melissa Romano
15:29:16 Susie Hedalen, Superintendent, Office of Public Instruction (OPI)
15:31:46 Matt Bachand, NCEE
15:33:51 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten
15:34:21 Matt Bachand, NCEE
15:35:12 Janice Case, NCEE
15:53:23 Sen. Matt Regier
15:53:31 Matt Bachand, NCEE
15:56:19 Janice Case, NCEE
15:56:32 Rep. Melissa Romano
15:57:26 Pad McCracken, LSD
15:59:52 Vice Presiding Officer Sara Novak

16:01:06 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ANY OTHER TOPIC WITHIN THE COMMITTEE'S JURISDICTION

16:02:01 Grace Decker, Montana Advocates for Children Coalition (MACC)

REVIEW UPCOMING MEETING AGENDA AND TOPICS

16:05:47 Pad McCracken, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

[EXHIBIT 16](#)

16:09:37 Rep. Melissa Romano

16:10:11 Vice Presiding Officer Sara Novak

16:10:18 Presiding Officer Linda Reksten

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 16:10:26