

**Fifty-seventh Legislative Assembly of North Dakota
In Regular Session Commencing Tuesday, January 9, 2001**

**SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 4027
(Senators Thane, Heitkamp)**

A concurrent resolution directing the Legislative Council to study the prices for prescription drugs and possible mechanisms to lower those costs to consumers and the state, and whether the state should establish a program to assist in the purchase of prescription drugs based upon income.

WHEREAS, a study by the Center for Studying Health System Change reports that prescription drugs are responsible for 44 percent of the increase in health care costs; and

WHEREAS, Medicaid drug expenditures for the 1997-99 biennium totaled \$47.1 million, of which \$12.3 million were from the general fund; for the 1999-2001 biennium, the department of human services budgeted \$50.4 million, of which \$15 million are state funds; and the latest estimates indicate that the department of human services will expend \$63.5 million, of which \$18.9 million are state funds while the department of human services is anticipating expenditures in the next biennium to exceed \$80 million; and

WHEREAS, escalating prescription drug prices is an especially important issue to seniors because studies indicate the cost of the top 50 drugs used by elderly citizens in this country has been increasing at a rate that has outpaced inflation nearly two to one; and

WHEREAS, escalating prescription drug prices is an especially important issue to rural residents because rural residents typically have lower incomes, limited access to pharmacies, and pay more for prescription drugs than their urban counterparts; and

WHEREAS, studies indicate that inadequate access to affordable prescription drugs results in increased medical expenses such as increased emergency mental health services and increased nursing home admissions; and

WHEREAS, several states have initiated programs to address the affordability of prescription drugs, including Maine's Maine Rx program and Indiana's HoosierRx; and

WHEREAS, several states have introduced legislation to address the issue of affordability of prescription drugs, including Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, and Ohio;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF NORTH DAKOTA, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN:

That the Legislative Council study the prices for prescription drugs and possible mechanisms to lower those costs to consumers and the state, and whether the state should establish a program to assist in the purchase of prescription drugs based upon income; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Legislative Council report its findings and recommendations, together with any legislation required to implement the recommendations, to the Fifty-eighth Legislative Assembly.

President of the Senate

Speaker of the House

Secretary of the Senate

Chief Clerk of the House

Filed in this office this _____ day of _____, 2001,
at _____ o'clock _____ M.

Secretary of State