

Sixty-first
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO.

Introduced by

Representative Conrad

1 A concurrent resolution directing the Legislative Council to study the legislative process,
2 especially with respect to session length, workweeks, committee structure, and procedures that
3 would increase the timeliness of legislative action and effectiveness of legislators.

4 **WHEREAS**, the original Constitution of North Dakota, adopted in 1889, provided for a
5 biennial regular legislative session limited to 60 days; and

6 **WHEREAS**, until the 1943 regular session, the Legislative Assembly met on Saturdays,
7 and Saturdays and Sundays were included within the 60-day limitation; and

8 **WHEREAS**, beginning with the 1943 regular session, Sundays were no longer included
9 in the 60-day limitation, but the Legislative Assembly continued to meet on Saturdays; and

10 **WHEREAS**, in 1968 the constitution was amended to replace the 60-day limit with a
11 60-legislative-day limit; and

12 **WHEREAS**, beginning with 1971 regular session, the Legislative Assembly
13 discontinued regular sessions on Saturdays and no longer included Saturdays as within the
14 60-legislative-day limit; and

15 **WHEREAS**, the constitutional requirement for biennial sessions was eliminated in 1976;
16 and

17 **WHEREAS**, although in 1976 the constitution was amended to allow the Legislative
18 Assembly to meet 80 natural days during the biennium, the Legislative Assembly has met in
19 reconvened session only once since 1976; and

20 **WHEREAS**, in 1945 the Legislative Assembly created the Legislative Research
21 Committee, which reviewed legislative proposals during the interim between legislative
22 sessions; and

23 **WHEREAS**, beginning with the 1953-54 interim, the Legislative Research Committee
24 established an interim committee structure that included legislators other than members of the

1 Legislative Research Committee to assist in reviewing legislative proposals during the interim;
2 and

3 **WHEREAS**, in 1969 the Legislative Research Committee was designated as the
4 Legislative Council in recognition of the fact that its duties had expanded from merely reviewing
5 proposals presented by outside entities to providing legislators the information, assistance,
6 tools, and resources essential to fulfill the demands placed upon legislators; and

7 **WHEREAS**, recent Legislative Assemblies have successfully used statutorily created
8 commissions and committees, such as the Commission on Alternatives to Incarceration and the
9 Tribal and State Relations Committee, as vehicles for bringing stakeholders together with
10 legislators to study and make recommendations to executive officeholders and the Legislative
11 Assembly in an area of common interest; and

12 **WHEREAS**, the current standing committee structure of five committees meeting
13 Monday through Wednesday and five committees meeting Thursday and Friday has not
14 changed since it was implemented during the 1971 legislative session; and

15 **WHEREAS**, there may be a more efficient process than a 5-day, 3-day, and 2-day
16 committee structure for referral of legislative measures, scheduling of hearings, and making
17 recommendations on over 900 legislative proposals during a hectic and intense legislative
18 session compressed into a 14-week period once every two years; and

19 **WHEREAS**, there may be a more effective use of legislative days rather than imposing
20 an extreme hardship on employers and businesses in this state by taking valued employees or
21 business partners away while they serve as legislators and attend a four-month legislative
22 session every two years; and

23 **WHEREAS**, the executive budget process begins in February of even-numbered years
24 to prepare a budget that takes effect for a two-year period beginning in July of the following
25 year;

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

28 That the Legislative Council study the legislative process, especially with respect to
29 session length, workweeks, committee structure, and procedures that would increase the
30 timeliness of legislative action and effectiveness of legislators; and

- 1 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Legislative Council report its findings and
- 2 recommendations, together with any legislation or legislative rules changes required to
- 3 implement the recommendations, to the Sixty-second Legislative Assembly.