

**Fifty-eighth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota
In Regular Session Commencing Tuesday, January 7, 2003**

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 4035
(Senator Christenson)

A concurrent resolution directing the Legislative Council to study legislative alternatives to foster and promote economic development in areas on or near the Indian reservations in North Dakota, including rural areas near Indian reservations.

WHEREAS, the results of the decennial census of the state of North Dakota show that the fastest growing population within the state is Native Americans living within or near Indian reservations; and

WHEREAS, census results and other studies also show that the areas of the greatest concentration of poverty and unemployment in North Dakota are on or near the Indian reservations in the state and these areas of poverty and unemployment often extend to counties surrounding the reservations; and

WHEREAS, over 50 percent of all welfare recipients in the state of North Dakota are Native Americans, approximately one-third of the prison population is Native American, and the percentage of unemployed who are capable of work on the Indian reservations in North Dakota is greater than 50 percent; and

WHEREAS, various economic development efforts are being made and have been made by the federal government that will benefit Indian reservations but these efforts have not been sufficient to relieve the poor economic conditions that exist on the reservations in North Dakota; and

WHEREAS, tribal governments are also allocating a large portion of their resources toward economic development, including funds derived from lawful gaming activities conducted on the reservations, and have shown that these economic activities also assist in economic growth in nearby rural communities, but in light of population growth and the limited resources available to tribal governments, including the federal funds set aside on their behalf, the limited income and employment opportunities from gaming activities lawfully conducted in rural areas of the state and other sources of revenue and efforts at economic development, economic conditions for areas on or near reservations have only marginally improved; and

WHEREAS, the cost to the state of poor economic conditions on or near the Indian reservations is enormous, including the loss of state revenues because of low economic activity and low employment rates, the cost of welfare assistance, the cost of housing a large prison population, and the cost of other social issues associated with poverty and is probably measured in an amount in the hundreds of millions of dollars; and

WHEREAS, barriers to economic development on or near the Indian reservations and in surrounding rural areas include, among other things, lack of access to capital, lack of job training opportunities, lack of employment opportunities, lack of incentives to invest, such as programs that would reduce or eliminate taxes for specific periods, and lack of infrastructure necessary for investment; and

WHEREAS, the state of North Dakota has already enacted various economic development proposals that largely benefit the urban areas of the state and provide some assistance to rural areas but do not target the areas with the greatest concentration of poverty within the state, namely, areas on or near Indian reservations;

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

That the Legislative Council study legislative proposals that would provide economic incentives or provide targeted programs with measurable outcomes that would assist in economic development on or near the Indian reservations in North Dakota and in rural areas around the reservations, including proposals that would assist tribes and tribal members to gain access to capital needed for economic development; reduce or eliminate taxes for a specific period of time; enhance the capacity of state economic development programs already in existence to be coordinated with federal programs that promote economic development for Indian reservations; enhance the capacity of the Bank of North Dakota to provide loans for economic development on or near the reservations, such as lower interest rate loans; and create programs targeted to assist individual tribal members and other rural entrepreneurs to create and expand businesses that are likely to succeed in rural areas; 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-ninth 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 _____, 2003,
at _____ o'clock _____ M.

Secretary of State