

109TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. CON. RES. 406

Expressing the sense of Congress that the needs of children affected by major disasters are unique and should be given special consideration in conducting disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation activities, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 17, 2006

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of Congress that the needs of children affected by major disasters are unique and should be given special consideration in conducting disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation activities, and for other purposes.

Whereas the average annual number of major disasters declared by President was 38 in the 1980s, 46 in the 1990s, and 52 during the first half of this decade;

Whereas the annual number of major disasters in the United States is expected to continue to increase;

Whereas major disasters in the United States affect 2,000,000 to 3,000,000 people each year (as measured by the Federal Emergency Management Agency), even ex-

cluding the truly catastrophic events that occurred on the Gulf Coast in 2005;

Whereas 5,192 children were reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children as missing or displaced as a result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and it took 6 ½ months to reunite one of these children with her family;

Whereas among these children were 45 children who arrived at shelters separated from parents or guardians and without any adult supervision, and it took just over a month to resolve these cases;

Whereas 1,100 schools were closed immediately following Hurricane Katrina and 372,000 schoolchildren were initially unable to attend school in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast due to the hurricane;

Whereas 7 percent of these schools remain closed in Mississippi and 21 percent of these schools remain closed in Louisiana;

Whereas more than 400,000 children under age 5 live in or have evacuated from counties or parishes that have been declared major disaster areas;

Whereas the number of licensed child care facilities in areas affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita declined by 54 (4 percent) in Mississippi and 356 (25 percent) in Louisiana after the hurricanes;

Whereas children are known to benefit from rapid mental health programming following disasters to mitigate longer term impacts;

Whereas disaster management in the United States is carried out by local, State, and Federal government emergency management organizations, and the disaster management

programs and activities of these organizations do not fully respond to the unique needs of children;

Whereas local, State, and Federal government emergency management professionals lack the technical knowledge, support, and contacts to incorporate the unique needs of children into their disaster management programs and activities; and

Whereas legislative constraints on Federal disaster response and recovery aid programs restrict disaster officials from responding to the specific needs of children in a disaster, and the Federal Government does not have a liaison or program concerning children's issues in disasters: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
2 *concurring)*, That it is the sense of Congress that—

3 (1) the needs of children affected by major dis-
4 asters are unique and should be given special consid-
5 eration in conducting disaster preparedness, re-
6 sponse, recovery, and mitigation activities;

7 (2) the Federal Emergency Management Agen-
8 cy, in consultation with appropriate child-focused
9 nongovernmental organizations, should conduct ac-
10 tivities to address the needs of children in major dis-
11 asters, such as—

12 (A) incorporating suggestions from such
13 organizations on children's issues into the Na-
14 tional Response Plan;

1 (B) addressing the needs of children in
2 emergency shelters, trailer parks, and transi-
3 tional housing sites;

4 (C) jointly developing disaster prepared-
5 ness materials for children, families, and
6 schools to support their understanding of the
7 impact of disasters on children and strategies to
8 mitigate them; and

9 (D) jointly developing risk assessment tools
10 for communities to use in determining chil-
11 dren's specific disaster risks.

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