

109TH CONGRESS
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S. CON. RES. 94

Expressing the sense of Congress that the needs of children and youth affected or displaced by disasters are unique and should be given special consideration in planning, responding, and recovering from such disasters in the United States.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 11, 2006

Mr. COCHRAN (for himself and Ms. LANDRIEU) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of Congress that the needs of children and youth affected or displaced by disasters are unique and should be given special consideration in planning, responding, and recovering from such disasters in the United States.

Whereas major disasters resulting in Presidential disaster declarations in the United States have increased from an average of 38 per year in the 1980s, to 46 per year in the 1990s, to 52 per year during the first half of this decade;

Whereas the occurrence of major disasters in the United States is expected to continue to increase in the foreseeable future;

Whereas the number of people in the United States affected by disasters each year is a staggering 2,000,000 to 3,000,000 as measured by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (even outside of truly catastrophic events as occurred on the Gulf Coast in 2005);

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

Whereas the most serious of such cases were those 45 children arriving at shelters separated from parents or guardians with no adult supervision and it took more than 1 month to resolve all of those 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 in Mississippi 7 percent and in Louisiana 21 percent of elementary schools and secondary schools remained closed 6 months after Hurricane Katrina;

Whereas more than 400,000 children under the age of 5 live in or have evacuated from counties or parishes that have been declared disaster areas by the Federal Emergency Management Agency;

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

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

Whereas the existing system of disaster management in the United States is the purview of Federal, State, and local government emergency management organizations and the disaster management programs and activities of these organizations are not mandated nor are able to fully respond to the unique needs of children;

Whereas Federal, State, and local government emergency management professionals lack the technical knowledge, support, and contacts to address the unique needs of children that need to be incorporated into such professionals' disaster management programs and activities; and

Whereas existing 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 there is no government liaison or program concerning children's issues in disasters: Now, therefore, be it

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

3 (1) the needs of children and youth affected by
4 major disasters are unique and should be given special
5 consideration in planning, responding, and recovering
6 to major disasters; and

7 (2) the Federal Emergency Management Agency
8 should consult with appropriate child-focused
9 non-governmental organizations and public univer-

1 sity national research centers with experience in ad-
2 dressing the needs of children in major disasters to
3 address the needs of children and youth in disaster
4 preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation, in-
5 cluding by—

6 (A) incorporating suggestions from such
7 organizations on children’s issues into the Na-
8 tional Response Plan;

9 (B) seeking the recommendations of such
10 organizations on how to address the needs of
11 children in emergency shelters, trailer parks,
12 and transitional housing sites;

13 (C) jointly developing child-, family-, early
14 childhood service-, and school-focused disaster
15 preparedness materials to support under-
16 standing of the impact of disasters on children
17 and strategies to mitigate them; and

18 (D) jointly developing risk assessment tools
19 for communities to use in determining chil-
20 dren’s specific disaster risks.

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