

By: Senator(s) Hewes

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 538

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING CELLULAR SOUTH NETWORK FOR
2 PERFORMING EXEMPLARY SERVICE ON THE MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST DURING
3 THE HURRICANE KATRINA CRISIS.

4 WHEREAS, founded in 1988, Cellular South is the nation's
5 largest privately held wireless company and the only wireless
6 company headquartered in Mississippi; and

7 WHEREAS, Cellular South announced that its wireless network
8 in South Mississippi, including the Mississippi Gulf Coast, was
9 fully operational as of Friday, September 9, 2005, three days
10 earlier than previously estimated. Despite Hurricane Katrina's
11 destruction, the Mississippi-based company never lost service in
12 parts of the most storm-ravaged areas, particularly in Hattiesburg
13 and Biloxi and had teams in place that began immediate repairs of
14 cell sites and infrastructure following the storm; and

15 WHEREAS, on Monday, August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina, a
16 Category Four Hurricane, crashed with unrelenting and violent
17 force onto the entire Mississippi Gulf Coast, making landfall at
18 or around Waveland, Mississippi. In one day, the worst natural
19 disaster in our history struck us a grievous blow, leaving a
20 90-mile swath of destruction along the coast and causing severe
21 damage throughout central and north Mississippi; and

22 WHEREAS, the reliability of the Cellular South network after
23 the storm is reflected in the fact that the company has seen a 256
24 percent increase in the number of minutes carried on behalf of
25 other carriers' customers since the storm in the affected area.
26 The increase equates to more than 8.5 million minutes of usage
27 (MOUs) from other carriers' customers, following the storm; and

28 WHEREAS, "Cellular South employees, some of whom were dealing
29 with their own personal losses, knew that communication was
30 critical for hurricane victims and evacuees and they did
31 everything they could to fully restore our customers' ability to
32 reach loved ones or call for emergency help in the aftermath of
33 the storm," said Hu Meena, company president. "As just one
34 example, The Washington Post noted in one of its stories a
35 Cellular South network technician in Biloxi who literally crawled
36 out of his home that had been destroyed by a fallen tree, got his
37 family to safety and then traveled to the nearest cell site to
38 begin repair work;" and

39 WHEREAS, Cellular South utilized 300 generators and 20,000
40 gallons of fuel, as well as over 400 employees dedicated to
41 restoring the network as quickly as possible. Through the
42 dedication and hard work of the team, the network was restored
43 ahead of schedule, and reported record minutes of use upon
44 restoration of service. Cellular South donated over 1,000 phones
45 to local, state and federal officials who worked and are still
46 working to rebuild Mississippi, as well as to many Red Cross
47 Shelters so that hurricane victims would have a way to communicate
48 with their loved ones. Cellular South donated a total of 50
49 million free relief minutes to customers in the hardest hit of
50 areas; and

51 WHEREAS, while it is still early to complete a full
52 assessment, estimates indicate the financial impact of Hurricane
53 Katrina on Cellular South are likely to be in the range of \$8 to
54 \$12 Million Dollars; and yet, the company's goal was to do
55 whatever it took to restore service for customers and take care of
56 employees - both those affected by Hurricane Katrina and those
57 working to restore wireless service:

58 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
59 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That

60 we do hereby commend the executives and employees of Cellular
61 South for their exemplary service, conduct and performance
62 rendered prior to and subsequent to Hurricane Katrina's
63 unprecedented destruction on and near the Mississippi Gulf Coast
64 in August and September, 2005, and we offer our thanks to these
65 individuals for their assistance in providing communications
66 during this critical time, as we endeavor to rebuild our state and
67 restore its economy.

68 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be forwarded to
69 Mr. Hu Meena, President of Cellular South, and be made available
70 to the Capitol Press Corps.