

By: Senator(s) Hewes, Dawkins,
Gollott, Cuevas

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 521

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION URGING GOVERNMENTAL DISASTER RELIEF
2 AGENCIES TO GIVE SPECIAL CONSIDERATION TO THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN.

3 WHEREAS, major disasters resulting in disaster declarations
4 by the President have increased from an average of 38 per year in
5 the 1980s, to 46 per year in the 1990s, to 52 per year during the
6 first half of this decade; and

7 WHEREAS, the occurrences of major disasters are expected to
8 continue to increase in the foreseeable future; and

9 WHEREAS, the number of children affected each year by
10 disasters such as Katrina is enormous; and

11 WHEREAS, schools were closed immediately after Hurricane
12 Katrina, and in Mississippi 7% of elementary and secondary schools
13 remained closed 6 months after Katrina; and

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

18 WHEREAS, the number of licensed child care facilities in
19 areas affected by Hurricane Katrina declined by 4% (54 facilities)
20 in Mississippi as a result of the hurricane; and

21 WHEREAS, children are known to benefit from rapid mental
22 health programs following disasters to mitigate longer term
23 impacts; and

24 WHEREAS, the existing system of disaster management in the
25 United States is the purview of federal, state, and local
26 government emergency management organizations, and such

27 organizations are not mandated to nor are they able to fully
28 respond to the unique needs of children; and

29 WHEREAS, federal, state, and local government emergency
30 management professionals lack the technical knowledge, support,
31 and contacts to address the unique needs of children that must be
32 incorporated into such professionals' disaster management
33 programs; and

34 WHEREAS, existing constraints on federal disaster response
35 and recovery aid programs restrict disaster officials from
36 responding to the specific needs of children in a disaster, and
37 there is no government liaison or programs concerning children's
38 issues in disasters:

39 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
40 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That
41 the needs of children affected by major disasters are unique and
42 should be given special consideration in planning, responding to,
43 and recovering from major disasters; and the Federal Emergency
44 Management agency and other governmental emergency management
45 professionals should consult with appropriate child-focused
46 nongovernmental organizations and public universities with
47 experience in addressing the needs of children in major disaster
48 preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation, including:

49 • Incorporating recommendations from such organizations on
50 children's issues into the national, state, and local response
51 plan.

52 • Seeking the recommendations of such organizations on how
53 to address the needs of children in emergency shelters, trailer
54 parks and transitional housing sites.

55 • Jointly developing child, family, and school-focused
56 disaster preparedness materials to support understanding of the
57 impact of disasters on children and strategies to mitigate the
58 impact.

59 • Jointly developing risk assessment tools for communities
60 to use in determining children's specific disaster risks.

61 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Secretary of the Senate
62 shall forward a certified copy of this resolution to the Governor
63 of the State of Mississippi, the President of the United States,
64 the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency or its
65 successor, to members of Mississippi's congressional delegation,
66 to the members of the Boards of Supervisors of the following
67 counties directly affected by the Hurricane Katrina Disaster:
68 Harrison, Hancock, Jackson, George, Stone and Pearl River, and be
69 made available to the Capitol Press Corps.