

By: Senator(s) Hewes, Gollott

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 571

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO URGE THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY
2 MANAGEMENT AGENCY TO CONSIDER THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN MAJOR
3 DISASTER PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE, RECOVERY AND MITIGATION.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

42 (1) The needs of children affected by major disasters are
43 unique and should be given special consideration in planning,
44 responding to, and recovering from major disasters; and

45 (2) The Federal Emergency Management agency and other
46 governmental emergency management professionals should consult
47 with appropriate child-focused nongovernmental organizations and
48 public universities with experience in addressing the needs of
49 children in major disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and
50 mitigation, including:

51 (a) Incorporating suggestions from such organizations
52 on children's issues into the national, state, and local response
53 plan;

54 (b) Seeking the recommendations of such organizations
55 on how to address the needs of children in emergency shelters,
56 trailer parks and transitional housing sites;

57 (c) Jointly developing child, family, and
58 school-focused disaster preparedness materials to support
59 understanding of the impact of disasters on children and
60 strategies to mitigate the impact, and

61 (d) Jointly developing risk assessment tools for
62 communities to use in determining children's specific disaster
63 risks.

64 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be transmitted
65 to the Executive Director of the Federal Emergency Management
66 Agency and members of Mississippi's Congressional Delegation and
67 be made available to the Capitol Press Corps.