

SCR29, As Adopted by Senate, September 23, 2010

Senators Garcia, Pappageorge and Birkholz offered the following concurrent resolution:

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 29.

A concurrent resolution to support first responder and first receiver personal preparedness planning priorities in state law and local policies.

Whereas, According to the National Preparedness Guidelines adopted by the United States Department of Homeland Security, uniformed emergency responders constitute less than 1 percent of the total U.S. population. The expectation among citizens for first responder support outweighs their ability by a large margin; and

Whereas, First responders serve as role models to our citizens, who respect them as a reliable component of our national security system and for their commitment to protect citizens and critical infrastructure; and

Whereas, The American Red Cross warns that only 7 percent of Americans have taken the necessary steps to prepare for disasters, which could mean that as many as 93 percent of uniformed emergency responders remain unprepared with a preset individual preparedness plan; and

Whereas, Research on disaster preparation and recovery resiliency in human development concluded that "in the event of a flu pandemic, bio-terrorism, a natural disaster, or any other large-scale catastrophe, the best surveillance, equipment, communication systems, antiviral supplies, military, and emergency services in the world will not be effective without equal attention to the issues posed by human behavior under conditions of life-threatening danger to children and families"; and

Whereas, A critical lesson from Hurricane Katrina is that first responder personnel cannot function at best efficiency if they are worried about their own families. The role of law enforcement, fire, EMS, and other front-line personnel is highly stressful. In situations where these local responders are uncertain about the welfare and even survival of their families, that stress level is sometimes raised to the breaking point. During Katrina, this point was tragically made when several officers left their duty assignments to check on and evacuate their families. Such conduct, while not to be condoned, is certainly predictable when first responders and first receivers do not have a preset plan that provides for their families' security and recovery; and

Whereas, Policies that support individual preparedness are needed to close the human resiliency gap facing emergency first responders and first receivers. This conclusion was recognized by the federal government to ensure the availability of the executive branch in an emergency under Federal Continuity Directive No. 1, as established by the United States Department of Homeland Security. Federal Continuity Directive No. 1 calls for using the federal executive branch plans and procedures to "provide guidance to all staff in developing family support plans which will increase personal and family preparedness throughout the organization and support employee availability during a continuity event"; and

Whereas, The National Preparedness Guidelines of 2007 seek to incorporate lessons learned from past disasters into national preparedness priorities. Governments at all levels should adopt and modify policies and budgets to aid in prioritizing the importance and follow-through of individual preparedness planning, which includes basic components such as identifying hazards and emergencies common to the geographic location; developing a family emergency and communication plan that includes preset sheltering plans for individuals and pets; assembling enough disaster supply kits so one is available wherever an individual is; identifying and documenting community warning systems and evacuation routes; learning what to do for specific hazards common to the geographic location; collecting and securing vital records critical to recovery; and practicing and putting in place a mechanism to update and maintain a plan; and

Whereas, It must be state policy to support public awareness and action through the proposed Personal Preparedness Standards Act and to support, encourage, and fund state and local continuity programs to incorporate personal preparedness measures for identified first responder and first receiver personnel to more fully ensure their ability to individually and collectively respond to a continuity disaster event. Funding priorities for personal preparedness planning for all first responder and first receiver personnel should receive the highest priority and be acknowledged as the basic foundation of emergency management planning; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That we support first responder and first receiver personal preparedness planning priorities in state law and local policies; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to local government officials and private entities that employ first responders and first receivers.