

2017 First Extraordinary Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 4

BY REPRESENTATIVE ZERINGUE

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To memorialize the United States Congress to recognize that the Louisiana coastal area as an area in crisis and to enact federal regulatory reform and disaster recovery regulations that minimize delays in the processes by which the state of Louisiana responds to the crises that we face as a result of coastal land loss and natural disasters.

WHEREAS, the citizens of Louisiana are no strangers to natural disasters and have been heavily involved in the fight for flood protection infrastructure that will protect our vital region, home to two million people who live and work at the epicenter of our nation's valuable energy, wetlands, and seafood resources; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's three million acres of wetlands are lost at the rate of about sixteen square miles per year, but reducing these losses is proving to be very difficult and extremely costly; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's wetlands today represent nearly forty percent of the wetlands located in the continental United States, but account for nearly eighty percent of the losses experienced in the continental United States; and

WHEREAS, many studies indicate that major shifts in the course of the Mississippi River over thousands of years built the land in south Louisiana through its delta building process; and

WHEREAS, man-made levees have contributed significantly to the degradation of the wetlands with the disintegration intensified by the channelization caused by the construction of the Mississippi River levees and man-made canals; and

WHEREAS, the seasonal flooding that previously provided sediments critical to the healthy growth of wetlands that sustain our deltaic system has been virtually eliminated by construction of massive levees that channel the river for over a thousand miles which in turn cause the sediment carried by the river to now be discharged into the Gulf of Mexico far from the coast, thereby depriving wetlands of vital sediment; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's coastal area is critical to our nation's energy security with half of the country's oil refineries, a network of pipelines that serve ninety percent of the nation's offshore energy production and thirty percent of its total oil and gas supply, and a port complex supporting twenty percent of all waterborne commerce vital to thirty-one states; and

WHEREAS, these valuable and necessary human activities such as energy exploration, commercial and recreational navigation, agriculture, and development during the past century have affected the wetlands, directly and indirectly, enabling salt water from the Gulf of Mexico to intrude into brackish and freshwater wetlands and contributing to wetlands deterioration and loss increasing the vulnerability of our coastal communities; and

WHEREAS, the state has committed extensive resources to address this crisis, through the establishment of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority tasked with development of a state Master Plan to provide hurricane protection, coastal restoration, the reduction of saltwater intrusion, and improving hydrology throughout the coastal area by allowing water to move between the interior and exterior marshes of the system, including a mitigation plan that will create an additional one thousand three hundred and fifty-two acres of coastal marsh, and risk reduction benefits; and

WHEREAS, the state has substantially increased its financial commitment to the coast resulting in significant progress on projects that maintain land and reduce risk, however capricious regulatory requirements waste tax payer money, delay or deny projects, and increase risk both to the federal treasury and our citizens resulting in increased construction and emergency response costs.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana memorializes the Congress of the United States to recognize that the Louisiana coast is in a state of crisis and in need of recognition by the President and the federal government, that federal disaster attention and cooperation are acutely needed to assist the state to better provide for the

health, safety, and welfare of the people who need it most, and to increase federal investment in infrastructure that provides coastal protection in coastal Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the secretary of the United States Senate and the clerk of the United States House of Representatives and to each member of the Louisiana delegation to the United States Congress as well as the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to enable collaboration between the federal, state, and local officials to clear regulatory hurdles, and inform Americans everywhere about the value of our critical communities, ecosystems, and our unique hurricane protection and disaster recovery needs.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE