

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 29

BY SENATOR KLEINPETER AND REPRESENTATIVE CHASSION

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To create and provide with respect to a joint legislative committee to study and make recommendations with respect to the water quality of the Atchafalaya Basin.

WHEREAS, the Atchafalaya Basin is the largest river swamp in North America and a vital ecological, economic, and cultural resource for the state of Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, the basin serves as a critical floodway for the Mississippi River system and plays an essential role in flood control, water storage, and sediment distribution within the Atchafalaya Basin Floodway System; and

WHEREAS, the basin provides essential habitat for fish, wildlife, migratory birds, and aquatic species, and supports significant commercial and recreational fisheries that contribute to the economy and heritage of Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, the Atchafalaya Basin has experienced substantial sediment accumulation over many decades due to natural river processes and human alterations of the Mississippi River system, including channelization, levee construction, dredging, and operation of flood control structures; and

WHEREAS, large quantities of sediment carried by the Mississippi and Red Rivers are diverted into the Atchafalaya Basin through the Old River Control Structure and other hydraulic features of the flood control system; and

WHEREAS, the accumulation of sediment in the basin has contributed to reduced water depths, impaired water circulation, and the formation of spoil banks and sediment deposits that restrict natural hydrologic connectivity; and

WHEREAS, reduced water flow and increased sedimentation can degrade water quality, increase stagnation, alter nutrient dynamics, and contribute to the loss of aquatic habitat; and

WHEREAS, these changes may adversely affect fish populations and the

productivity of commercial fisheries, including crawfish and finfish, as well as recreational fishing opportunities relied upon by residents and visitors; and

WHEREAS, the continued accumulation of sediment within the basin may also affect flood conveyance capacity, navigation channels, and the long-term ecological sustainability of the Atchafalaya Basin; and

WHEREAS, a comprehensive review of sediment sources, transport mechanisms, and basin management strategies is necessary to develop effective solutions to reduce sediment inputs and restore water flow and ecological function within the basin.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby create a joint legislative committee to study the water quality of the Atchafalaya Basin to include the causes and effects of sediment accumulation in the Atchafalaya Basin and Atchafalaya Basin Floodway System, to evaluate impacts on water flow, water quality, habitat, and commercial and recreational fisheries, and to recommend strategies to reduce sediment entering the basin and to remove accumulated sediment to restore ecological and hydrological function.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the joint legislative committee created herein shall be composed of members of the Senate who represent Districts 17, 21, and 22 and members of the House of Representatives who represent Districts 18, 46, 50, 60 and 96.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the president of the Senate shall name one of the Senate members of the committee as the chairperson for the limited purpose of calling the first meeting, and at the first meeting, the members shall elect a chairman and other officers as the joint committee may deem appropriate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that for purposes of this study the joint legislative committee shall have all powers otherwise provided by law and by the rules of the respective houses, as well as all powers inherent in legislative committees and that the members thereof shall receive the per diem and mileage provided for committees by the rules of the respective house.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the joint committee shall receive staff support from the committee staff of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and the House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in conducting this study the joint committee may request data, technical assistance, and recommendations from state and federal agencies, academic institutions, and stakeholders involved in the management of the Atchafalaya Basin and will seek input and advice from the following:

1. The Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority.
2. The Department of Conservation and Energy.
3. The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.
4. The Department of Environmental Quality.
5. The United States Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District.
6. Commercial fishing interests in the Atchafalaya Basin.
7. Recreational fishing interests in the Atchafalaya Basin.
8. Hydrologist and sediment transport experts from Louisiana public universities.
9. Landowners and local governments within the Atchafalaya Basin.
10. Atchafalaya Basinkeeper.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a majority of the committee shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business and all official actions of the committee shall require the affirmative vote of a majority of the members.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the joint committee shall submit a written report of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislative or administrative actions, to the legislature and to the David R. Poynter Legislative Research Library no later than April 1, 2027, and may submit supplemental reports as deemed necessary.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the joint committee shall terminate on January 11, 2028.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES