

2016 Second Extraordinary Session

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 5

BY SENATORS MIZELL AND JOHNS

COURTS. Requests the Louisiana Supreme Court to fully fund the CASA Assistance Program.

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Louisiana Supreme Court to fully fund the CASA Assistance Program to the greatest extent practicable for the benefit of Louisiana's abused and neglected children.

WHEREAS, the people of Louisiana recognize the importance of protecting children whose physical or mental health and welfare is substantially at risk of harm by abuse, neglect, or exploitation; and

WHEREAS, there are more than 4,000 children in the custody of the state of Louisiana, through no fault of their own, having been removed from their families due to abuse or neglect and are in the foster care system of the state with placement and services provided by the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana law authorizes the court to appoint a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program to advocate for timely placement of foster children in permanent, safe, and stable homes; and

WHEREAS, CASA is part of Louisiana's Court Improvement Program, providing valuable resources to the children and the courts exercising juvenile jurisdiction in Child In Need of Care proceedings; and

WHEREAS, the CASA program is a research-based effective program of trained,

1 competent, court-appointed community volunteers stepping forward to infuse greater
2 efficiency in government systems, and to significantly improve outcomes for the abused and
3 neglected children that they represent; and

4 WHEREAS, there are seventeen local CASA programs established in compliance
5 with National CASA Association standards serving over 3,000 of Louisiana's foster children
6 by recruiting, training, screening, and supervising over 1,800 community volunteer
7 advocates to represent the best interest of abused and neglected children in court; and

8 WHEREAS, national research has established the effectiveness of CASA volunteers
9 in serving children: a child with a CASA volunteer is more likely to find a safe, permanent
10 home; a child with a CASA volunteer is half as likely to re-enter the foster care system; a
11 child with a CASA volunteer is more likely to succeed in school and less likely to spend
12 three or more years in state custody; and, one year of CASA advocacy costs less than one
13 month in foster care; and

14 WHEREAS, in 2015, CASA volunteer advocates provided approximately 65,000
15 hours of service to foster children, saving the state of Louisiana millions of dollars in needed
16 assistance and advocacy for children; and

17 WHEREAS, each of the seventeen local CASA programs is supported, in part, by
18 the CASA Assistance Program established by the Louisiana Supreme Court with state
19 general funds and each program relies on this funding assistance to provide a CASA
20 volunteer advocate and services to abused and neglected children; and

21 WHEREAS, CASA volunteer advocates ensure that we do the right thing by the
22 children whose care and whose futures have been placed in the hands of our public child
23 welfare system.

24 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana hereby urges
25 and requests the Louisiana Supreme Court to fully fund the CASA Assistance Program to
26 the greatest extent practicable for the benefit of Louisiana's abused and neglected children.

27 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the
28 Louisiana Supreme Court.

The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Jerry J. Guillot.

DIGEST

SCR 5 Original 2016 Second Extraordinary Session Mizell

Requests the La. Supreme Court to fully fund the CASA Assistance Program to the greatest extent practicable.