

2015 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 228

BY REPRESENTATIVE ROBERT JOHNSON

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To memorialize the United States Congress to take such actions as are necessary to reestablish a right-of-way through the Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuge in order to provide access to property owned by the Avoyelles Parish School Board.

WHEREAS, Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuge, located in Avoyelles Parish and named for its most prominent water body, the 350-acre Lake Ophelia that was at one time a channel of the nearby Red River, was established in 1988 to protect the Mississippi and Red River floodplain ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, due to its location in east-central Louisiana, this area is prime waterfowl hunting territory influenced by both the Mississippi and Central Flyways which are the highways in the sky for bringing millions of duck and geese each spring and fall to the area; and

WHEREAS, another species found in the Avoyelles Parish area is the Louisiana black bear which was listed as threatened within its historic range of southern Mississippi, Louisiana, and east Texas under the Endangered Species Act on January 7, 1992, due to extensive habitat loss and modification, as well as human-related mortality; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana currently supports three core bear populations; the Tensas River Basin population in the north, the upper Atchafalaya River Basin population in central Louisiana, and the coastal population in the southern Atchafalaya River Basin; and

WHEREAS, the Black bear management efforts in Louisiana by both the state and the federal agencies have had a great deal of success with a likely result that the central Louisiana and northern Louisiana populations expanding towards each other through the area set aside for the Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuge; and

WHEREAS, because of the likelihood that the two populations will merge in the area, the Department of the Interior has designated a certain parcel of land in the Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuge as a Black bear habitat which in turn has prevented ingress and egress to a six hundred forty acre tract owned by the Avoyelles Parish School Board; and

WHEREAS, through the years, this sixteenth-section land owned by the Avoyelles Parish School Board has been available for public hunting, camping, and other recreational activities, activities from which there has been great economic benefit to Avoyelles Parish; and

WHEREAS, without these outdoor activities, businesses in Avoyelles Parish that rely on recreational activities in the area including hunting, fishing, and camping for their income have been and will continue to be negatively impacted by the loss of access to the acreage owned by the Avoyelles Parish School Board; and

WHEREAS, simply having the Department of the Interior allow a limited right-of-way access to the school board owned land will solve the problem.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby memorialize the United States Congress to take such actions as are necessary to reestablish a right-of-way through the Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuge in order to provide access to property owned by the Avoyelles Parish School Board.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the presiding officers of the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Congress of the United States of America and to each member of the Louisiana congressional delegation.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE