

Regular Session, 2008

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 180

BY REPRESENTATIVE PERRY

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request Louisiana State University to direct its academic faculty to prepare a report and outline on the social and economic issues involved in the implementation of the rules and regulations of the National Flood Insurance Program as that implementation affects the rebuilding efforts in all coastal Louisiana communities impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

WHEREAS, during the seventeenth century, about one hundred French families settled in a portion of Nova Scotia controlled by the British, then known as Acadia, where they developed friendly relations with the Indians and learned their hunting and fishing techniques; and

WHEREAS, when the French and Indian War began in 1754, the British government, doubting the neutrality of the Acadians, demanded that they take an oath of allegiance to the British monarch, and since the oath required renouncing a key article of their Roman Catholic faith, most refused and as a result many were imprisoned; and

WHEREAS, in what is known as the Great Expulsion (*Grand Dérangement*), about thirteen thousand Acadians, three-fourths of the Acadian population in Nova Scotia, were expelled from the colony between 1755 and 1764, their homes were destroyed, and they were exiled among the American colonies and other remote lands; and

WHEREAS, in the chaos of this expulsion, families and friends were separated and placed on different ships as a result of a deliberate effort on the part of the British to "exterminate" the Acadian culture through forced assimilation; and

WHEREAS, many Acadians found themselves unwelcome among the thirteen colonies, some were deported to France and the French islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon near Newfoundland, and other Acadians became slaves in the British colonies, the Carribean, and in Europe; and

WHEREAS, large numbers of these Acadians eventually made their way to Louisiana just after France ceded its colony of Louisiana to Spain in 1762 and were referred to as Cajuns by the English-speaking colonists; and

WHEREAS, the Spanish allowed the Acadians to continue to speak their language, practice Roman Catholicism, which was also the official religion of Spain, and otherwise pursue their livelihoods with minimal interference; and

WHEREAS, the majority of the Acadians settled in southern Louisiana in the area west of what is now New Orleans, mainly along the Mississippi River, and they were later moved by the colonial government to the swamps, cheniers, and prairies further west and southwest of New Orleans, to lands deemed uninhabitable due to the harsh living conditions, where they lived among the Attakapa and Chitimacha Native American tribes; and

WHEREAS, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was so moved by the plight of the Acadians that he wrote a poem titled "Evangeline" and described in moving detail the story of two young lovers separated by the *Grand Dérangement* and their travels to the land of Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, for more than two hundred years, the Acadians have lived in the coastal regions of Louisiana, a land Longfellow described as the region "where reigns perpetual summer, where through the Golden Coast, and groves of orange and citron, sweeps with majestic curve the river away to the eastward ... a maze of sluggish and devious waters ... like a network of steel, extend(ing) in every direction; A land where over their heads the towering and tenebrous boughs of the cypress met in a dusky arch, and trailing mosses in mid-air waved like banners that hang on the walls of ancient cathedrals ... A land where Deathlike the silence seemed, and unbroken, save by the herons home to their roosts in the cedar-trees returning at sunset, Or by the owl, as he greeted the moon with demoniac laughter"; and

WHEREAS, the children and grandchildren of these Acadians remained somewhat secluded in this region until the early 1900s in the areas of coastal Louisiana and regrettably during the first half of the twentieth century, contempt for the Acadians reemerged within their dear state of Louisiana, and attempts were made to forcibly suppress Cajun culture by measures such as forbidding the use of French in schools; and

WHEREAS, the indomitable spirit of their French ancestry could not be suppressed, and they prevailed once again and worked hard to overcome the stigma associated with their ethnic heritage and instill pride in their Acadian roots, forming the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, it is in the coastal wetlands and prairies of South Louisiana that the Cajuns have not merely endured, not merely survived, but have lived and laughed and cried and built a culture uniquely American with a spiritual richness and time-honored traditions complete with Mardi Gras and king cakes, family togetherness, hard work, plenty of fun, music played with lively fiddles, accordions, spoons, and washboards, and a unique local cuisine of the indigenous species of seafood and animal life with dishes such as etouffee, gumbo, and jambalaya; and

WHEREAS, these Cajuns have distinguished themselves as hunters, trappers, fishermen, shrimpers, doctors, lawyers, engineers, roustabouts, farmers, priests and preachers, nuns, and missionaries, and in numerous other honorable professions and maintained their religious faith traditions as Protestants and Catholics; and

WHEREAS, it is here in their homeland of coastal Louisiana that they have endured disasters both natural and man-made; and

WHEREAS, the eastern and western Cajun regions of Louisiana were among the hardest hit by Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005, and Hurricane Rita on September 26, 2005; and

WHEREAS, in the aftermath of these two natural disasters, again the trumpets sound, and the ill winds blow, for many of the sons and daughters of the Acadians are about to be exiled again, not at the hands of a government demanding allegiance but by the same government to which they have already pledged allegiance and the same government that many of their sons and daughters have fought and even died for; and

WHEREAS, this exile will be produced as the result of what some who live outside the coastal region of Louisiana suggest is a well-intentioned, reasonable application of the rules and regulations of the National Flood Insurance Program, which if not challenged and changed, will force those who live in many of the areas hardest hit by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, especially in the southern portion of the parishes of Cameron, Vermilion, St. Mary, Terrebonne, Lafourche, Plaquemines, and St. Bernard, to leave the land of their ancestry, the

land of memories, to where they know not, to be finally and forever assimilated into a culture familiar yet strangely foreign to their traditions and way of life; and

WHEREAS, the effect of these rules and regulations will be to force them to build homes they cannot afford to build, and as a result the land that no one wanted and which was settled by the people no one wanted will now be available only to the wealthiest, if available at all; and

WHEREAS, a policy with an impact of this magnitude has never been implemented on such a large scale before in the modern history of this nation; and

WHEREAS, people in California, Washington, Nevada, and Utah who live in earthquake-prone areas were allowed to develop privately funded programs to secure earthquake insurance which is privately provided; and

WHEREAS, although flood insurance is provided through an agency of the federal government and there is a cost and risk associated with living in coastal regions of Louisiana, these risks in terms of damages due to storm surges caused by hurricanes is not unlike those risks faced by any other community along the Gulf Coast from the Florida Keys to Brownsfield, Texas; and

WHEREAS, since these rules and regulations make no distinction between risk of damages in flood plains due to storm surges and that caused by flooding resulting from rising waters due to rain and are based primarily on elevation, other communities along the Gulf Coast who are just as vulnerable to damage caused by storm surge are allowed to rebuild in areas next to the beach because the initial elevation of the area is higher than that found in the coastal area of Louisiana.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request Louisiana State University to direct its academic faculty to prepare a report and outline on the social and economic issues involved in the implementation of the rules and regulations of the National Flood Insurance Program as that implementation affects the rebuilding efforts in all coastal Louisiana communities impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this report include any and all suggestions or recommendations as to practical alternatives to such policies to allow for the preservation of the unique culture of coastal Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the chairman of the Board of Supervisors of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College and to the president of the Louisiana State University System.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE