



HR1279

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2           WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of  
3 Representatives recognize that there are distressed counties  
4 and communities throughout Illinois that struggle with many  
5 economic and social problems including crime, unemployment,  
6 poverty, mortgage foreclosures, declining property values,  
7 deficiencies in public health services, and deficits in public  
8 education; and

9           WHEREAS, In recent years these economic and social problems  
10 have become more prevalent and they have exacerbated existing  
11 conditions which include: inequalities in access to justice in  
12 the civil court system, an overburdened and ineffective  
13 criminal justice system, overcrowded correctional facilities,  
14 increased homelessness, inadequate educational opportunities,  
15 insufficient affordable housing, inadequate delivery of social  
16 services to the less fortunate, and deficits in the  
17 availability and quality of public health services; and

18           WHEREAS, Some segments of our society, some communities,  
19 and some counties disproportionately experience these serious  
20 social and economic ills; for example, the Illinois counties  
21 which had 16% or more of their population in poverty in 2010  
22 included: Alexander, Champaign, Coles, Cook, Franklin,  
23 Gallatin, Hardin, Jackson, Lawrence, McDonough, Macon, Marion,

1 Massac, Perry, Pike, Pope, Pulaski, Saline, Union, Vermilion,  
2 White Williamson, and Winnebago; and the municipalities with a  
3 population of over 100,000 that had family poverty rates of 10%  
4 or more are: Aurora, Chicago, Joliet, Naperville, Peoria,  
5 Rockford, and Springfield; and

6 WHEREAS, It is important to take a comprehensive approach  
7 to the ongoing crisis of distressed communities in Illinois and  
8 a significant poverty rate is among the best indicators that a  
9 community is in distress; and

10 WHEREAS, Care must be taken when addressing poverty and its  
11 associated problems in counties with distressed communities  
12 because an emphasis on serving the largest number of people in  
13 poverty will miss other areas of the State with significant  
14 problems and an emphasis on areas with the highest rates of  
15 poverty will ignore large populations in need, as shown by  
16 these facts:

17 while Cook County has the highest number of persons  
18 living in poverty (which amounts to nearly 50% of the  
19 State's poverty population), DuPage County (which has  
20 historically been considered to be a wealthy county with a  
21 small low-income population) has the second-highest number  
22 of persons in poverty;

23 the 10 poorest counties in Illinois, as measured by  
24 poverty rate, are generally downstate with small total

1 populations and while their poverty rates are very high  
2 (the highest county poverty rate is 31.1%; and an average  
3 for all 10 of the poorest counties is a poverty rate of  
4 21.6%), these counties collectively account for less than  
5 10% of the State's total poverty population;

6 the 10 counties with the highest numbers of persons in  
7 poverty are, for the most part, near urban centers (5 of  
8 these counties are in the Chicago metropolitan area) and  
9 these 10 counties include over 70% of the State's poverty  
10 population;

11 a Statewide emphasis on the top 10 counties with high  
12 poverty rates will ignore the needs of 94% of the State's  
13 poverty population, but an emphasis on the 10 counties with  
14 the highest numbers of people in poverty will deemphasize  
15 the counties with the highest poverty rates; and

16 WHEREAS, The U.S. Census Bureau on September 12, 2012  
17 announced that, in 2011:

18 the median household income in the United States  
19 declined by 1.5% from the 2010 median, which was the second  
20 consecutive annual drop;

21 the weighted average poverty threshold for a family of  
22 four in 2011 was \$23,021;

23 the nation's official poverty rate was 15.0 percent,  
24 with 46.2 million people in poverty; and

25 although the poverty rate and number of people remained

1 statistically unchanged since 2010, this is the fourth year  
2 in a row with such significant amounts of poverty in this  
3 country; and

4 WHEREAS, The poverty rate in Illinois increased to 14.2% in  
5 2011 and there has been a 42% increase in the poverty rate in  
6 Illinois from 2007 to 2011; and

7 WHEREAS, Living in a high poverty rate Chicago neighborhood  
8 carries with it an increased threat to life itself; a recent  
9 comparison of 2 sets of Chicago neighborhoods, the 5 poorest  
10 and the 5 least poor, showed that:

11 the poorest neighborhoods had a homicide rate that is  
12 11 times the homicide rate in the least poor neighborhoods;

13 the mortality rate for the leading causes of death in  
14 Chicago (cancer, heart disease, diabetes-related  
15 illnesses, stroke, and unintentional injury) is 5 times  
16 higher in the 5 poorest neighborhoods than it is in the 5  
17 least poor neighborhoods;

18 the infant mortality rate is 2.5 times higher in the 5  
19 poorest neighborhoods than in the 5 least poor  
20 neighborhoods; and

21 a measure called the Years of Potential Life Lost  
22 (YPLL), which determines how many years of life are lost  
23 due to deaths in a community (using the base age of 75  
24 years), showed that the YPLL rate for homicide in the 5

1           poorest neighborhoods was 2,172 (that is for every 100,000  
2           residents 2,172 years of life were lost each year to  
3           homicide) compared to the YPLL homicide rate of only 186 in  
4           the 5 least poor neighborhoods; and

5           WHEREAS, So long as these social and economic problems are  
6           not successfully addressed in distressed counties and  
7           communities, the cost to taxpayers in Illinois for the many  
8           programs funded or operated by the State will only increase;  
9           and

10          WHEREAS, State government resources are expended in  
11          ever-increasing amounts to address these social and economic  
12          problems and those expenditures are a significant drain on the  
13          State's road to financial stability; and

14          WHEREAS, There exist numerous ways for State government  
15          programs to be operated more efficiently and more economically;  
16          and

17          WHEREAS, State government, taxpayers, and those living in  
18          distressed counties and communities with significant poverty  
19          rates could benefit from the creation of a State action plan  
20          that identifies: modifications that should be made to existing  
21          State programs so as to dramatically improve the delivery of  
22          services, reduce the cost of those services, and eliminate

1 wasteful spending; leadership programs and new educational  
2 opportunities that would foster and equip new leaders; and ways  
3 in which State government could actively create a change  
4 environment that will have numerous positive impacts; and

5 WHEREAS, If more effective, efficient, and economical ways  
6 to deliver social and law enforcement services can be  
7 developed, then significant strides can be made in the overall  
8 welfare of the distressed counties and communities and those  
9 solutions could be replicated, with adjustments as  
10 appropriate, to all communities in Illinois; and

11 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
12 NINETY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that  
13 we urge the Governor to create a Distressed Counties and  
14 Communities Commission composed of stakeholders in distressed  
15 counties and communities, representatives of appropriate State  
16 agencies, and community leaders to explore, discuss, and  
17 coordinate efforts to prepare an action plan to offer enhanced  
18 State governmental services in a meaningful way, to foster  
19 leadership, and to create programs that can succeed in  
20 addressing the myriad social and economic problems that exist;  
21 this, in turn, can benefit all Illinois communities; and be it  
22 further

23 RESOLVED, That we urge that the Governor appoint members of

1 the Distressed Counties and Communities Commission by early  
2 January 2013, so as to allow the Distressed Counties and  
3 Communities Commission to hold its first meeting in January  
4 2013, and designate an executive department to provide  
5 administrative support for the Commission; and be it further

6       RESOLVED, That the Distressed Counties and Communities  
7 Commission be charged with: finding and creating innovative  
8 means to address and meet the numerous needs of those who  
9 receive State social services; designing plans to assist and  
10 enhance the efforts of State agencies and local governments  
11 that provide law enforcement and social services; analyzing  
12 successful state and local governmental programs in other  
13 locales in law enforcement, court administration, corrections,  
14 job skill retraining, education, economic opportunity, job  
15 creation, social services, and public health; and developing an  
16 action plan that includes information about changes and  
17 improvements to existing programs, statutes, and regulations  
18 that can be made by reallocating existing resources and not  
19 increasing State taxes; and be it further

20       RESOLVED, That we urge that the Governor call upon the  
21 Distressed Counties and Communities Commission to hold public  
22 hearings and issue a written report of its findings and  
23 recommendations to the Governor and to the General Assembly on  
24 or before April 15, 2013; and be it further

1           RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
2 delivered to Governor Pat Quinn.