



HR0095

LRB098 07359 GRL 41383 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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

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

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WHEREAS, Some counties and communities disproportionately experience these serious social and economic ills; for example, Illinois counties which had 16% or more of their population in poverty in 2010 include Alexander, Champaign, Coles, Cook, Franklin, Gallatin, Hardin, Jackson, Lawrence, McDonough,

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

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

15 WHEREAS, An emphasis on areas with the highest rates of  
16 poverty will ignore large populations in need; for example,  
17 Cook County has the highest number of persons living in  
18 poverty, totaling nearly 50% of the State's poverty population,  
19 but DuPage County, which has historically been considered to be  
20 a wealthy county with a small low-income population, has the  
21 second-highest number of persons in poverty; the 10 poorest  
22 counties in Illinois, as measured by poverty rate, are  
23 generally downstate, with small total populations, and while

1 their poverty rates are very high (the highest county rate is  
2 31.1%, with an average for all 10 of the poorest counties of  
3 21.6%), these counties collectively account for less than 10%  
4 of the State's total poverty population; the 10 counties with  
5 the highest numbers of persons in poverty are, for the most  
6 part, near urban centers, with 5 in the Chicago metropolitan  
7 area; these 10 counties include over 70% of the State's poverty  
8 population; and

9 WHEREAS, A state-wide emphasis on the top 10 counties with  
10 high poverty rates will ignore the needs of 94% of the State's  
11 poverty population, but an emphasis on the 10 counties with the  
12 highest numbers of people in poverty will deemphasize the  
13 counties with the highest poverty rates; and

14 WHEREAS, On September 12, 2012, the U.S. Census Bureau  
15 announced that, in 2011, the median household income in the  
16 United States declined by 1.5% from the 2010 median, which was  
17 the second consecutive annual drop; the weighted average  
18 poverty threshold for a family of four in 2011 was \$23,021; the  
19 nation's official poverty rate was 15%, with 46.2 million  
20 people in poverty; although the poverty rate and number of  
21 people remained statistically unchanged since 2010, this is the  
22 fourth year in a row with such significant amounts of poverty  
23 in the nation; and

1           WHEREAS, In 2011, the poverty rate in Illinois was 14.2%;  
2 this amounts to a 42% increase in the poverty rate in Illinois  
3 from 2007 to 2011; and

4           WHEREAS, Living in an area with a high poverty rate may  
5 include threats to life itself; for example, a recent  
6 comparison of the 5 poorest and the 5 least poor Chicago  
7 neighborhoods showed that the poorest neighborhoods had a  
8 homicide rate that is 11 times the homicide rate in the least  
9 poor neighborhoods; the mortality rate for the leading causes  
10 of death in Chicago (cancer, heart disease, diabetes-related  
11 illnesses, stroke, and unintentional injury) is 5 times higher  
12 in the 5 poorest neighborhoods than it is in the 5 least poor  
13 neighborhoods; the infant mortality rate is 2 1/2 times higher  
14 in the poorest neighborhoods than in the 5 least poor  
15 neighborhoods; the Years of Potential Life Lost (YPLL), an  
16 estimate of the average years a person would have lived if he  
17 or she had not died prematurely, showed that the YPLL due to  
18 homicide in the 5 poorest neighborhoods was 2,172 for every  
19 100,000 residents (assuming a life expectancy of 75 years)  
20 compared to the YPLL homicide rate of only 186 in the 5 least  
21 poor neighborhoods; and

22           WHEREAS, So long as these social and economic problems are  
23 not successfully addressed in distressed counties and  
24 communities, the cost to taxpayers in the State of Illinois for

1 the many programs operated or funded by the State will only  
2 increase; and

3 WHEREAS, State government resources are expended in  
4 ever-increasing amounts to address these social and economic  
5 problems; those expenditures are a significant drain on the  
6 State's road to financial stability; therefore, be it

7 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
8 NINETY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that  
9 the Distressed Counties and Communities Task Force is created;  
10 and be it further

11 RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall consist of the  
12 following members: 4 members appointed by the Governor; 2  
13 members appointed by the President of the Senate; 1 member  
14 appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate; 2 members  
15 appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives; 1  
16 member appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of  
17 Representatives; 1 member appointed by the Director of the  
18 Department of Human Services; 1 member appointed by the  
19 Illinois State Board of Education; 1 member appointed by the  
20 Department of Children and Family Services; 1 member appointed  
21 by the Illinois Housing Development Authority; and 1 member  
22 appointed by the Director of the Human Rights Commission; and  
23 be it further

1           RESOLVED, That this Task Force shall take testimony from  
2 stake holders in distressed counties and communities,  
3 representatives of appropriate State agencies, and community  
4 leaders to explore, discuss, and coordinate efforts to prepare  
5 an action plan to offer enhanced State governmental services in  
6 a meaningful way, to foster leadership, and to create programs  
7 that can succeed in addressing the myriad social and economic  
8 problems that exist in order to benefit all Illinois  
9 communities; and be it further

10           RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall hold hearings in  
11 distressed counties and communities to hear directly from  
12 stakeholders on their ideas for an innovative anti-poverty  
13 agenda; and be it further

14           RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall find and create  
15 innovative means to address and meet the numerous needs of  
16 those who receive State social services, design plans to assist  
17 and enhance the efforts of State agencies and local governments  
18 that provide law enforcement and social services, analyze  
19 successful State and local governmental programs in other  
20 locations in the subject areas of law enforcement, court  
21 administration, corrections, job skill retraining, education,  
22 economic opportunity, job creation, social services, and  
23 public health, and develop an action plan that includes

1 information about changes and improvements to existing  
2 programs, statutes, and regulations that can be made by  
3 reallocating existing resources and not increasing State  
4 taxes; and be it further

5 RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall develop a legislative  
6 and administrative agenda that can serve as a national model  
7 for developing a successful anti-poverty agenda; and be it  
8 further

9 RESOLVED, That the Office of the Governor shall provide  
10 administrative support for the Task Force; and be it further

11 RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall submit a report to the  
12 Illinois House of Representatives within 60 days of the  
13 completion of the hearings held by the Task Force.