

2015 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 205

BY REPRESENTATIVE WOODRUFF

CONSUMERS/FOOD-BEVERAGES: Creates a task force to study and identify food deserts within the state

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

2 To create a task force to study and identify food deserts in communities where people travel
3 an unreasonable distance to buy fresh produce and proteins as a result of grocery
4 stores and affordable fresh food disappearing from their communities.

5 WHEREAS, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines a food
6 desert as any census district that has a poverty rate of at least 20 percent (or the median
7 family income is less than 80 percent of the statewide average) and at least five hundred
8 people or 33 percent of the population lives over one mile, in urban areas, or ten miles, in
9 rural areas, from the nearest grocery store or supermarket; and

10 WHEREAS, approximately one million people in Louisiana live in a food desert, in
11 both rural and urban areas; and

WHEREAS, food deserts are one of the main contributing factors to the obesity epidemic in the United States, by forcing struggling families to rely on processed and fast food instead of fresh vegetables, fruit, and proteins; and

15 WHEREAS, the adult obesity rate for African-Americans in Louisiana is 41.9
16 percent, for Latino Americans is 32.6 percent, and for White Americans is 30.4 percent; and

17 WHEREAS, African-American children are more likely to become obese than White
18 children according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and

19 WHEREAS, food deserts frequently exist due to economic stagnation and
20 disinvestment; and

1 WHEREAS, food deserts have a direct correlation with the relatively high percentage
2 of obesity, diabetes, and overweight citizens in these metropolitan areas of Louisiana; and

3 WHEREAS, the percentage of overweight adults in the metropolitan areas of
4 Louisiana are 42.7 percent for Alexandria, 31.5 percent for Baton Rouge, 34.6 percent for
5 Hammond, 32.7 percent for Houma-Thibodaux, 34 percent for Lafayette, 31.3 percent for
6 Lake Charles, 35.7 percent for Monroe, 33.6 percent for New Orleans, and 39.3 percent for
7 Shreveport-Bossier City; and

8 WHEREAS, adult obesity rates in the metropolitan areas of Louisiana are 27.1
9 percent for Alexandria, 34.8 percent for Baton Rouge, 45.4 percent for Hammond, 42.6
10 percent for Houma-Thibodaux, 30.9 percent for Lafayette, 34.1 percent for Lake Charles,
11 29.8 percent for Monroe, 30.2 percent for New Orleans, and 33.6 percent for Shreveport-
12 Bossier City; and

13 WHEREAS, diabetes rates in the metropolitan areas of Louisiana are 12.4 percent
14 for Alexandria, 11.9 percent for Baton Rouge, 7.9 percent for Hammond, 11.5 percent for
15 Houma-Thibodaux, 9.6 percent for Lafayette, 8.8 percent for Lake Charles, 15.9 percent for
16 Monroe, 11.9 percent for New Orleans, and 10.9 percent for Shreveport-Bossier City.

17 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby
18 create a task force to identify and study the impact of food deserts in communities where
19 people travel an unreasonable distance to buy fresh produce and proteins as a result of
20 grocery stores and affordable fresh food disappearing from their communities.

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall be composed of the
22 following members:

23 (1) Two representatives of the Department of Health and Hospitals, designated by
24 the secretary of the department.

25 (2) Two representatives of the Pennington Biomedical Research Center, designated
26 by the executive director of the center.

27 (3) Two representatives of the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center
28 New Orleans, School of Public Health, designated by the chancellor of the university.

29 (4) Two representatives of the Tulane University School of Public Health and
30 Tropical Medicine, designated by the chancellor of the university.

1 (5) Two representatives of the Southern University and A&M College Agricultural
2 Research and Extension Center, designated by the chancellor of the university.

3 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall submit their findings to the
4 House and Senate committees on health and welfare and the Department of Health and
5 Hospitals no later than June 30, 2016.

6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this task force will be staffed by the House
7 Committee on Health and Welfare for all meetings of the task force.

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana calls for access to
9 healthy, fresh, and affordable food in these rural and urban areas to improve overall health
10 by combating obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and other health-related problems that
11 can be aided by a healthy diet.

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution reaffirms the Louisiana
13 Legislature's commitment to wellness policies, relative to mind, body and spirit, that
14 incentivize and encourage the establishment of supermarkets and farmers' markets, as well
15 as affordable, fresh, and healthy food options in local stores and restaurants within
16 communities lacking access.

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana supports policy
18 solutions encouraging grocers and other store owners to sell healthy food options in under
19 served communities, including food trusts and programs to help small stores carry fresh food
20 for purchase.

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana urges the United
22 States Department of Agriculture, congress, state legislators, local officials, agencies, and
23 nonprofits to work together for the elimination of food deserts in the communities where
24 people travel an unreasonable distance to buy fresh produce and proteins as a result of
25 grocery stores and affordable fresh food disappearing from their communities.

26 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana applauds and
27 supports the expanded use of electronic benefits cards at farmers' markets and urges local
28 growers to allow the use of electronic benefits cards whenever possible.

29 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana applauds the
30 actions already taken and urges congress to increase allocations to the Healthy Food

1 Financing Initiative, a collaborative effort of the United States Department of Agriculture,
2 the United States Department of Health and Human Services, and the United States
3 Department of the Treasury which brings grocery stores and other healthy food retailers to
4 underserved urban and rural communities across America.

5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the
6 governor of Louisiana, the president of the Louisiana State Senate, the speaker of the
7 Louisiana House of Representatives, and other state government officials as appropriate.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

HCR 205 Original

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Woodruff

Creates a task force to study and identify food deserts in the communities where people travel an unreasonable distance to buy fresh produce and proteins as a result of grocery stores and affordable fresh food disappearing from their communities, and provide the House and Senate Committees on Health and Welfare and the Department of Health and Hospitals with a report detailing where the food deserts are located and make recommendations to resolve the food desert issue in those communities.

Provides that the committee shall submit a final report by June 30, 2016.

Provides that the task force will be staffed by the House Committee on Health and Welfare.

Provides that the task force be composed of the following members:

- (1) Two representatives of the Department of Health and Hospitals, designated by the secretary of the department.
- (2) Two representatives of the Pennington Biomedical Research Center, designated by the executive director of the center.
- (3) Two representatives of the La. State University Health Sciences Center New Orleans School of Public Health, designated by the chancellor of the university.
- (4) Two representatives of the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, designated by the chancellor of the university.
- (5) Two representatives of the Southern University and A&M College Agricultural Research and Extension Center, designated by the chancellor of the university.