

2015 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 205

BY REPRESENTATIVES WOODRUFF, ADAMS, BARROW, BILLIOT, WESLEY
BISHOP, BURRELL, COX, DOVE, HUNTER, AND PYLANT

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To create a task force to study and identify food deserts in 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.

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

WHEREAS, approximately one million people in Louisiana live in a food desert, in 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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, the percentage of overweight adults in the metropolitan areas of Louisiana are 42.7 percent for Alexandria, 31.5 percent for Baton Rouge, 34.6 percent for

Hammond, 32.7 percent for Houma-Thibodaux, 34 percent for Lafayette, 31.3 percent for Lake Charles, 35.7 percent for Monroe, 33.6 percent for New Orleans, and 39.3 percent for Shreveport-Bossier City; and

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

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

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby create a task force to identify and study the impact of food deserts in 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.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall 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 Louisiana 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.

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

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

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

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

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana urges the United States Department of Agriculture, congress, state legislators, local officials, agencies, and nonprofits to work together for the elimination of 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.

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana applauds the actions already taken and urges congress to increase allocations to the Healthy Food Financing Initiative, a collaborative effort of the United States Department of Agriculture, the United States Department of Health and Human Services, and the United States Department of the Treasury which brings grocery stores and other healthy food retailers to underserved urban and rural communities across America.

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

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE