

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 45

BY SENATOR FOIL

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry to study and make recommendations on ways to increase urban forestry in the state.

WHEREAS, the legislature declared in Act 746 of the 1980 Regular Session of the Legislature that:

- (1) Trees serve as a vital resource in the urban environment and as an important psychological link with nature for the urban dweller.
- (2) Trees are a valuable economic asset in our cities. They help maintain or increase property values and attract business and new residents to urban areas.
- (3) Trees play an important role in energy conservation by the modification of temperature extremes, humidity, and winds. This role is particularly important in reducing the amount of energy consumed in heating and cooling buildings and homes, and potentially producing a local fuel and energy source.
- (4) Trees directly reduce air pollution by removing airborne particulates from the atmosphere and helping to purify the air.
- (5) Trees also help reduce noise, provide habitat for songbirds and other wildlife, reduce surface runoff and protect urban water resources, and enhance the aesthetic quality of life in the city.
- (6) Growing conditions in urban areas for trees and associated plants have worsened so that many Louisiana cities are now losing more trees than are replaced; and

WHEREAS, under R.S. 3:4382, "urban forestry" is defined as the cultivation and management of trees in urban areas for their present and potential contribution to the

physiological, sociological, and economic well-being of urban society; and

WHEREAS, since the inception of Act 746 of the 1980 Regular Session of the Legislature, adequate funding for the cultivation and management of trees in urban areas, within the state, has been a roadblock in establishing and maintaining a healthy urban forestry; and

WHEREAS, the USDA Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry Program awards federal grants to fund projects that support urban communities through equitable access to trees and the benefits they provide including neighborhoods with less crime, less pollution, reduced energy costs, and higher quality of life compared to similar areas with less trees and green spaces; and

WHEREAS, a 2021 report on the Economics of Urban Forestry in Louisiana highlighted how trees have a tremendous impact on local economies and quality-of-life for the citizens showcasing that:

- (1) Three thousand five hundred sixty-six people are employed as a result of urban forestry activities in Louisiana.
- (2) Urban trees in the state contribute \$3.9 billion in community-wide environmental benefits each year, such as carbon sequestration, air pollution removal, and avoided storm-water runoff.
- (3) The urban forestry sector in Louisiana has an annual sales and employment footprint worth \$411 million; and

WHEREAS, in 2023, however, the USDA only awarded the state four federal grants in support of urban forestry for local programs to manage and maintain community forests and the urban tree canopy; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to maintain economic benefits of urban forestry in their states, Arkansas, Mississippi, Texas, and others have found funding mechanisms outside of USDA grants to promote and support urban forestry programs; and

WHEREAS, the urban areas in Louisiana are continuing to experience population growth and expansion, and in order to invest in the state's urban forestry footprint, it is important to proactively plan, plant, and maintain our community trees and urban tree canopy.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry to study and make recommendations regarding funding mechanisms to increase urban forestry within the state.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture, and Rural Development and the House Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture, and Rural Development not later than February 15, 2025.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the commissioner of the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry.

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES