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S.C.R. No. 21

1 SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The United States and the United Mexican States
3 share a border of 2,000 miles from Brownsville, Texas, to San Diego,
4 California; the four states of the United States and the six states
5 of the United Mexican States along the border are home to more than
6 75 million residents, an increase of about 11 million since 1990;
7 and

8 WHEREAS, A significant percentage of these 10 states'
9 population resides in the 44 United States counties and 80 Mexican
10 municipalities adjacent to the border, where rapid population
11 growth is putting great pressure on an already inadequate
12 infrastructure and straining the border region past its economic
13 limits and resources, the tragic effects of which have broad
14 repercussions on the health of residents in both countries; and

15 WHEREAS, Setting the stage for many of the health problems of
16 the border is the standard of living of many in the region; more
17 than a third of United States border families live at or below the
18 federal poverty guideline, and an estimated 350,000 people live in
19 colonias, unzoned, semirural communities with no access to public
20 drinking water or wastewater facilities; and

21 WHEREAS, Such deficiencies in public works have increased the
22 risk of exposure to pollution and water-borne contaminants since
23 many of the primary sources of water along the border are
24 contaminated by sewage and pollution from agricultural and

1 industrial sources; according to the United States Health Resources
2 and Services Administration, 122 million liters of raw sewage are
3 dumped into the Tijuana, New, and Rio Grande rivers daily, and a
4 series of studies conducted by several United States and Mexican
5 agencies, including the Texas Department of Health, monitored sites
6 along the Rio Grande and found chemicals such as PCBs, cyanide,
7 mercury, and lead at significant levels; and

8 WHEREAS, Beyond the effects of population, poverty, and
9 pollution, many of the health concerns endemic to the border region
10 are exacerbated by a lack of access to primary care and preventive
11 medicine; uneven distribution of hospitals and physicians,
12 inadequate transportation, limited immunizations, and a shortage
13 of bilingual health care providers contribute to otherwise
14 preventable health problems; and

15 WHEREAS, Several standard health indicators reflect the
16 shortcomings of the health care system along the border; the
17 incidence of hepatitis A and tuberculosis is two to three times the
18 national average, and measles, HIV/AIDS, and various infectious
19 diseases disproportionately threaten the population of the border
20 region as compared to the United States as a whole; and

21 WHEREAS, Due to these and many other concerns and in an effort
22 to provide international leadership to optimize health and quality
23 of life along the United States-Mexico border, an agreement between
24 the United States secretary of health and human services and the
25 secretary of health of the United Mexican States created the United
26 States-Mexico Border Health Commission in 2000; and

27 WHEREAS, The crises of health along the border are myriad and

1 profound, with complications arising from cultural, economic, and
2 geographic conditions unique to the region; although the United
3 States-Mexico Border Health Commission has made great progress in
4 promoting health and reducing health disparities, strategic
5 planning and comprehensive study are critical for the commission to
6 fulfill its mission to provide the tools necessary for the future
7 well-being of the border population; now, therefore, be it

8 RESOLVED, That the 78th Legislature of the State of Texas
9 hereby memorialize the Congress of the United States to request
10 that the United States Department of Health and Human Services fund
11 a benchmark study coordinated by the United States-Mexico Border
12 Health Commission and conducted by universities from the border
13 area of each of the adjoining border states in both the United
14 States and the United Mexican States to engage each state's health
15 policy with respect to the border health issues and goals outlined
16 in Healthy Border 2010/Frontera Saludable 2010, a border-wide
17 program of health promotion and disease prevention that defines an
18 agenda for improving health in the United States-Mexico border
19 region; and, be it further

20 RESOLVED, That the study also address early intervention and
21 preventive strategies; water and wastewater issues; immunization;
22 behavioral health issues, including nutrition and exercise;
23 elimination of health disparities among the border population; and
24 response to disaster and disease outbreak; and, be it further

25 RESOLVED, That the Texas secretary of state forward official
26 copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, to
27 the speaker of the house of representatives and the president of the

1 senate of the United States Congress, to the secretary of the United
2 States Department of Health and Human Services, and to all the
3 members of the Texas delegation to the congress with the request
4 that this resolution be officially entered in the Congressional
5 Record as a memorial to the Congress of the United States of
6 America.