

By: Shapleigh

S.C.R. No. 21

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

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

6 WHEREAS, A significant percentage of these 10 states'
7 population resides in the 23 U.S. counties and 39 Mexican
8 municipalities adjacent to the border, where rapid population
9 growth is putting great pressure on an already inadequate
10 infrastructure and straining the border region past its economic
11 limits and resources, the tragic effects of which have broad
12 repercussions on the health of residents in both countries; and

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

19 WHEREAS, Such deficiencies in public works have increased the
20 risk of exposure to pollution and water-borne contaminants since
21 many of the primary sources of water along the border are
22 contaminated by sewage and pollution from agricultural and
23 industrial sources; according to the U.S. Health Resources and
24 Services Administration, 122 million liters of raw sewage are

1 dumped into the Tijuana, New, and Rio Grande rivers daily, and a
2 series of studies conducted by several U.S. and Mexican agencies,
3 including the Texas Department of Health, monitored sites along the
4 Rio Grande and found chemicals such as PCBs, cyanide, mercury, and
5 lead at significant levels; and

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

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

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

25 WHEREAS, The crises of health along the border are myriad and
26 profound, with complications arising from cultural, economic, and
27 geographic conditions unique to the region; although the USMBHC has

1 made great progress in promoting health and reducing health
2 disparities, strategic planning and comprehensive study are
3 critical for the commission to fulfill its mission to provide the
4 tools necessary for the future well-being of the border population;
5 now, therefore, be it

6 RESOLVED, That the 78th Legislature of the State of Texas
7 hereby memorialize the Congress of the United States to request
8 that the secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human
9 Services direct the United States-Mexico Border Health Commission
10 to coordinate a benchmark study conducted by universities of each
11 of the adjoining border states in both the United States and the
12 United Mexican States to engage each state's health policy with
13 respect to early intervention and preventive strategies; water and
14 wastewater issues; immunization; behavioral health issues,
15 including nutrition and exercise; elimination of health
16 disparities among the border population; and response to disaster
17 and disease outbreak; and, be it further

18 RESOLVED, That the Texas secretary of state forward official
19 copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, to
20 the speaker of the house of representatives and the president of the
21 senate of the United States Congress, to the secretary of the United
22 States Department of Health and Human Services, and to all the
23 members of the Texas delegation to the congress with the request
24 that this resolution be officially entered in the Congressional
25 Record as a memorial to the Congress of the United States of
26 America.