

By: Guillen

H.C.R. No. 171

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1           WHEREAS, The United States-Mexico border is the busiest  
2 international border in the world, with more than a million legal  
3 northbound crossings each day; this continual movement and a rapid  
4 expansion in population are placing unique pressures on the public  
5 health care system in the border region; and

6           WHEREAS, In Texas, local public health entities in small  
7 border communities confront a disproportionate number of serious  
8 issues; the American Medical Association has characterized the  
9 border area as a fertile ground for the development of infectious  
10 diseases such as hepatitis; rates of hepatitis A there are three  
11 times higher than in the rest of the United States, and in some  
12 2,300 colonias, the rates of salmonella and shigella infection are  
13 four times higher than elsewhere in the nation; and

14           WHEREAS, The fluidity of the large and diverse migrant  
15 population increases the incidence of such communicable diseases as  
16 HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis; moreover, approximately nine percent of  
17 TB cases in border areas involve strains resistant to at least one  
18 of the initial treatments; local public health care providers must  
19 function as the nation's first line of defense against infectious  
20 diseases, which also include multidrug-resistant infections and  
21 such vector-borne diseases as dengue fever and West Nile virus; and

22           WHEREAS, Environmental hazards related to air and water  
23 pollution and the use of pesticides are likewise of great concern,  
24 as is inadequate protection of the food supply; more than a third of

1 families in the border region have incomes below the federal  
2 poverty level, and the border counties struggle with a high  
3 incidence of such serious chronic illnesses as diabetes and  
4 hypertension, as well as respiratory and gastrointestinal  
5 ailments; a large percentage of the population lacks health  
6 insurance, and access to health care is further limited by the  
7 dearth of facilities and shortage of medical professionals; most  
8 border communities have been designated as Health Professions  
9 Shortage Areas and Medically Underserved Areas; and

10       WHEREAS, Public health initiatives and agencies in the border  
11 region suffer from chronic underfunding due to federal formulas  
12 based on raw population numbers rather than need or strategic  
13 importance in such realms as emerging disease control; although  
14 area public health professionals have responded quickly to recent  
15 threats, the continued effectiveness of the public health care  
16 system requires greater financial support for detection,  
17 laboratory testing, isolation, quarantine, and infection control;  
18 because biological and medical hazards do not respect political  
19 boundaries, it is also essential to upgrade communications  
20 equipment and services for the rapid exchange of information  
21 between communities in the United States and Mexico; and

22       WHEREAS, The disparity between public health needs and  
23 resources has reached a critical stage along the Texas-Mexico  
24 border; in order to address severe deficiencies in a comprehensive  
25 and targeted manner, a United States Department of Health and Human  
26 Services region should be established for the border counties,  
27 ensuring an appropriate level of dedicated funding; the sustained

1 and efficient allocation of federal resources would support local  
2 entities in their efforts to improve the health of the community and  
3 allow area professionals to perform effectively in roles that are  
4 vital to protecting the public and preventing the spread of disease  
5 not just along the border, but throughout Texas and the rest of the  
6 nation; now, therefore, be it

7         RESOLVED, That the 81st Legislature of the State of Texas  
8 hereby respectfully urge the United States Congress to direct the  
9 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to establish a public  
10 health region for the counties along the Texas-Mexico border and to  
11 dedicate an appropriate level of funding to meet the public health  
12 challenges particular to border communities; and, be it further

13         RESOLVED, That the Texas secretary of state forward official  
14 copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, to  
15 the speaker of the house of representatives and the president of the  
16 senate of the United States Congress, to the secretary of the U.S.  
17 Department of Health and Human Services, and to all the members of  
18 the Texas delegation to Congress with the request that this  
19 resolution be officially entered in the Congressional Record as a  
20 memorial to the Congress of the United States of America.