

(3) calls on the people of the United States to—

(A) observe the week of September 24, 2006, by focusing on the needs of the children and youths of the United States;

(B) recognize the efforts of children's charities and youth-serving organizations to enrich and better the lives of the children and youths of the United States; and

(C) support the efforts of the children's charities and youth-serving organizations of the United States as an investment for the future of the United States.

INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA

The resolution (S. Res. 611) supporting the efforts of the Independent National Electoral Commission of the Government of Nigeria, political parties, civil societies, religious organizations, and the people of Nigeria from one civilian government to another in the general elections to be held in April 2007 was considered and agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution (S. Res. 611), with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 611

Whereas the United States maintains strong and friendly relations with Nigeria and values the leadership role that Nigeria plays throughout the continent of Africa, particularly in the establishment of the New Partnership for African Development and the African Union;

Whereas Nigeria is an important strategic partner with the United States in combating terrorism, promoting regional stability, and improving energy security;

Whereas Nigeria has been, and continues to be, a leading supporter of the peacekeeping efforts of the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States by contributing troops to operations in Lebanon, Yugoslavia, Kuwait, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Rwanda, and Sudan;

Whereas past corruption and poor governance have resulted in weak political institutions, crumbling infrastructure, a feeble economy, and an impoverished population;

Whereas political aspirants and the democratic process of Nigeria are being threatened by increasing politically-motivated violence, including the assassination of 3 gubernatorial candidates in different states during the previous 2 months; and

Whereas the Chairperson of the Independent National Electoral Commission has—

(1) announced that governorship and state assembly elections will be held on April 14, 2007;

(2) stated that voting for the president and national assembly will take place on April 21, 2007; and

(3) vowed to organize free and fair elections to facilitate a smooth democratic transition: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the importance of Nigeria as a strategic partner and long-time friend of the United States;

(2) acknowledges the increasing significance of the leadership of Nigeria throughout the region and continent;

(3) commends the decision of the National Assembly of Nigeria to reject an amendment to the constitution that would have lifted the existing 2-term limit and allowed for a third presidential term;

(4) encourages the Government of Nigeria and the Independent National Electoral Commission to demonstrate a commitment to successful democratic elections by—

(A) developing an aggressive plan for voter registration and education;

(B) addressing charges of past or intended corruption in a transparent manner; and

(C) conducting objective and unbiased recruitment and training of election officials;

(5) urges the Government of Nigeria to respect the freedoms of association and assembly, including the right of candidates, members of political parties, and others—

(A) to freely assemble;

(B) to organize and conduct public events; and

(C) to exercise those and other rights in a manner free from intimidation or harassment;

(6) urges a robust effort by the law enforcement and judicial officials of Nigeria to enforce the rule of law, particularly by—

(A) preventing and investigating politically-motivated violence; and

(B) prosecuting those suspected of such acts;

(7) urges—

(A) President Bush to ensure that the United States supports the democratic gains made in Nigeria during the last 8 years; and

(B) the Government of Nigeria to actively seek the support of the international community for democratic, free, and fair elections in April 2007; and

(8) expresses the support of the United States for coordinated efforts by the Government of Nigeria and the Independent National Electoral Commission to work with political parties, civil society, religious organizations, and other entities to organize a peaceful political transition based on free and fair elections in April 2007 to further consolidate the democracy of Nigeria.

ESPERANZA INCIDENT FIRE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA IN OCTOBER 2006

The resolution (S. Res. 614) honoring the firefighters and other public servants who responded to the devastating Esperanza incident fire in southern California in October 2006 was considered and agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution (S. Res. 614), with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 614

Whereas, in late October 2006, the mountain communities west of Palm Springs, California were struck by a vast wildfire, which came to be known as the Esperanza Incident and which authorities believe was started by an arsonist;

Whereas the Esperanza Incident fire tragically claimed lives, homes and other buildings, and more than 40,000 acres of terrain;

Whereas nearly 3,000 firefighters from dozens of fire crews courageously battled the fast-spreading blaze, which was fanned by Santa Ana wind gusts up to 60 miles per hour;

Whereas 4 firefighters—Mark Loutzenhiser, Jess McLean, Jason McKay, and Daniel Hoover-Najera—made the ultimate sacrifice by giving their lives when flames overtook them as they tried to protect a home;

Whereas an additional firefighter, Pablo Cerda, joined them in that sacrifice when he too lost his life, after fighting to survive for 6 days in a hospital before succumbing to burns he had received fighting alongside his fallen colleagues;

Whereas firefighters honored the spirit of their fallen colleagues by completing the job

they started and controlling the blaze, even while recognizing considerable danger to their own well-being;

Whereas skilled and courageous aircraft personnel and additional emergency personnel, including law enforcement and medical personnel, also responded to the threat posed by the fire; and

Whereas law enforcement personnel are aggressively pursuing the conviction of the arsonist, and generous Californians have offered additional funds, on top of those offered by the Riverside County Board of Supervisors, to help bring the arsonist to justice: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes and honors—

(A) all of the firefighters who responded to the devastating Esperanza Incident fire in southern California in October 2006; and

(B) all others, including emergency, law enforcement, and medical personnel and aircraft crews, who contributed to controlling the fire, keeping Californians safe, and finding and arresting the suspected arsonist; and

(2) commends the firefighters and other personnel who responded to the fire for dedicated service to the people of California.

ALPHA PHI ALPHA FRATERNITY, INCORPORATED

The concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 384) recognizing and honoring the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated, the first intercollegiate Greek-letter fraternity established for African Americans, was considered and agreed to.

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE CONGRESS THAT PUBLIC POLICY SHOULD CONTINUE TO PROTECT AND STRENGTHEN THE ABILITY OF FARMERS AND RANCHERS TO JOIN TOGETHER IN COOPERATIVE SELF-HELP EFFORTS

The concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 119) expressing the sense of the Congress that public policy should continue to protect and strengthen the ability of farmers and ranchers to join together in cooperative self-help efforts was considered and agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 119), with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. CON. RES. 119

Whereas the ability of farmers and ranchers in the United States to join together in cooperative self-help efforts is vital to their continued economic viability;

Whereas Federal laws have long recognized the importance of protecting and strengthening the ability of farmers and ranchers to join together in cooperative self-help efforts, including to cooperatively market their products, ensure access to competitive markets, and help achieve other important public policy goals;

Whereas farmer- and rancher-owned cooperatives play an important role in helping farmers and ranchers improve their income from the marketplace, manage their risk, meet their credit and other input needs, and compete more effectively in a rapidly changing global economy;

Whereas farmer- and rancher-owned cooperatives also play an important role in