

110TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 1376

Commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Okeechobee Hurricane of
September 1928 and its associated tragic loss of life.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 24, 2008

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida (for himself, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Mr. MEEK of Florida, Mr. WEXLER, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. MAHONEY of Florida, Mr. KLEIN of Florida, Mr. PUTNAM, and Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

RESOLUTION

Commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Okeechobee
Hurricane of September 1928 and its associated tragic
loss of life.

Whereas the Okeechobee Hurricane, also known as Hurricane
San Felipe Segundo, formed in the Atlantic Ocean, trav-
eled through the Caribbean Sea, and up the eastern coast
of the United States between September 10 and Sep-
tember 20, 1928;

Whereas on September 16, 1928, the Okeechobee Hurricane
made landfall in the continental United States at West
Palm Beach, Florida, and proceeded north over Lake
Okeechobee, after which it decreased steadily in intensity
before dying in Ontario, Canada;

Whereas the Okeechobee Hurricane attained the highest classification of Category 5 for tropical cyclone intensity on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale, with winds exceeding 160 miles per hour;

Whereas the Okeechobee Hurricane is officially recognized by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration as the second deadliest hurricane on record in United States history, exacting the tragic loss of more than 4,000 lives in the United States, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and the Bahamas;

Whereas approximately 75 percent of fatalities from the Okeechobee Hurricane in the United States were migrant farm workers, the vast majority of which were African-American;

Whereas the extensive impact of the Okeechobee Hurricane on African-American migrant workers in southern and central Florida was memorialized in the famous 1937 literary work of Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*;

Whereas the Okeechobee Hurricane exacted horrendous damage valued at over \$16,000,000,000, adjusted for inflation, to the infrastructure and towns of western Palm Beach County alone;

Whereas many of those killed by the Okeechobee Hurricane in southern Florida were buried in segregated mass graves, such as the more than 670 African-American victims in a mass grave in West Palm Beach;

Whereas the Herbert Hoover Dike's system surrounding Lake Okeechobee consists of 143 miles of levee with 19 culverts, hurricane gates, and other water control struc-

tures that provide flood and storm damage reduction and other water control benefits;

Whereas on November 2, 2007, the Army Corps of Engineers Dam Safety Action Classification External Peer Review Panel designated the Herbert Hoover Dike with Class I designation of “urgent and compelling,” the highest risk category;

Whereas a breach of the Herbert Hoover Dike or similarly designated structures throughout the Nation could potentially cause the catastrophic loss of life and poses grave economic and environmental consequences to the surrounding communities;

Whereas given the ongoing potential of the Herbert Hoover Dike or other similarly designated structures to fail in the event of a major storm or hurricane, priority must be given to fully fund and expedite rehabilitation of such structures; and

Whereas economically disadvantaged and migrant communities are at increased risk for extensive damage and loss of life associated with natural disasters: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) memorializes the tragic loss of more than
3 4,000 lives in the United States and its territories
4 due to the Okeechobee Hurricane of 1928;

5 (2) recognizes the enduring importance of hur-
6 ricane preparedness measures, enhanced evacuation,
7 emergency plans, and disaster response training in
8 economically disadvantaged communities to prevent

1 a disproportionate impact of natural disasters and
2 disparities in disaster response;

3 (3) recognizes the role of relevant Federal agen-
4 cies, research institutes, universities, and disaster re-
5 sponse organizations in providing intensity fore-
6 casting, long-range projections of hurricane activity,
7 emergency management, and hurricane and storm
8 mitigation to better prepare for, respond to, and
9 mitigate the extensive loss of life and devastating
10 impacts of hurricanes and storms;

11 (4) fully supports initiatives to enhance our un-
12 derstanding of mitigation impacts on physical struc-
13 tures, including water management systems and
14 other infrastructures that may be vulnerable to with-
15 stand the most intense of storms;

16 (5) urges the Federal Government and State
17 and local governments to—

18 (A) commemorate and memorialize the
19 80th anniversary of Okeechobee Hurricane of
20 1928 and its associated tragic loss of more than
21 4,000 lives in the United States and its terri-
22 tories;

23 (B) appropriately recognize mass graves of
24 the victims of the Okeechobee Hurricane;

1 (C) take appropriate actions to quickly re-
2 pair and rehabilitate dikes, water management
3 systems, and other infrastructure in hurricane-
4 prone regions designated by the Army Corps of
5 Engineers with Class I “urgent and compel-
6 ling” vulnerability;

7 (D) take appropriate actions to encourage
8 hurricane and disaster preparedness, education,
9 response, and mitigation; and

10 (E) support programs and initiatives which
11 promote disaster preparedness, education, re-
12 sponse, and mitigation in economically dis-
13 advantaged and migrant communities; and

14 (6) recommits itself to hurricane preparedness,
15 safety education, response, and mitigation for all
16 communities in the 110th Congress.

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