

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, CYBER, AND HOMELAND SECURITY

Resolution ECH-18-17

A RESOLUTION URGING STATES TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF NATURAL DISASTERS ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN

WHEREAS, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) maintains that natural disasters affect human lives and living conditions and often have a more direct and adverse impact on women, as well as vulnerable groups such as children;

WHEREAS, natural disasters often have different impacts on men and women in regards to the associated risks and vulnerabilities, due to gender inequality, gender stereotypes and discrimination against women, including the lack of equal access to adequate information, economic opportunities, poverty, social exclusion, safety, and different family responsibilities;

WHEREAS, women are generally at greater risk than men for developing post-disaster psychological problems, but women who are married or cohabitating with men may be at even greater risk than single women;

WHEREAS, child custody and visitation can be an issue when children are displaced from their homes and in the care of the non-custodial parent during a natural disaster;

WHEREAS, natural disasters further complicate divorce filings, and court proceedings that many inhibit gaining access to property owned by ancestors in order to receive Federal Emergency Management Agency funds needed for demolition, rebuilding, and recovery which poses a challenge after a natural disaster has occurred;

WHEREAS, police reports of domestic violence occurrences seem to increase after natural disasters which may have a direct effect on women's post disaster recovery;

WHEREAS, states should provide the utmost efforts to secure equal access to disaster relief assistance between women and men and provide disaster response and support for recovery that is fully responsive to the needs, views, and enjoyment of all human rights of women with special attention paid to the needs of pregnant and lactating women, families with infants, single-headed households and widows;

WHEREAS, governments need rigorous standards ensuring that in post-disaster environments, special attention is given to sexual and gender-based violence and to the prevention of various forms of exploitation, including the risk of trafficking and the particular vulnerability of girls, unaccompanied children and those in the foster care system;

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WHEREAS, there is a need for the analytical collection of demographic and socio-economic data and information disaggregated by sex, age, and disability and to develop gender indicators and analyze gender differences, including gender-sensitive assessment and planning processes; and integration of this information into disaster risk reduction and management policies and programs;

WHEREAS, the promotion of income-generating activities and employment opportunities for women affected by natural disasters, particularly rural women, through support for community-based businesses, the establishment of necessary social services, and access to market, credit, and other financial services is vitally important; and

WHEREAS, state officials have a significant role to play to ensure women and men equal access to natural-hazard early warning systems and promote disaster risk reduction planning; they must take into account the specific needs, and views and all human rights raise public awareness by providing training at all levels on gender-sensitive approaches to disaster risk reduction, including in the areas of science and technology.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) urges and requests that the United States Congress take such actions as are necessary to reevaluate, implement, and enforce policies and procedures regarding how services are delivered to women and children before, during, and after a natural disaster has occurred;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL encourages state policymakers to gain information about how resources are distributed to women and children in their respective state, increase their awareness of gender equality and how it relates to contractor fraud, and ensure collaboration with their state office of emergency preparedness and homeland security to ensure the safety and protection of women and children during and post a natural disaster; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, members of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, and other federal and state government officials as appropriate.

SPONSOR: Senator Regina Ashford Barrow (LA)

**Committee of Jurisdiction: Emergency Preparedness, Cyber, and Homeland Security
Policy Committee**

Certified by Committee Chair: Representative Willie Perkins (MS)

Ratified in Plenary Session: Ratification Date is December 2, 2017

Ratification is certified by: Representative Gregory W. Porter (IN), President