

# House Calendar No. 267

110TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. RES. 1376

[Report No. 110–856]

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

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## 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

SEPTEMBER 16, 2008

Reported with amendments, referred to the House Calendar, and ordered to be printed

[Strike out all after the preamble and insert the part printed in *italic*]

[Strike out all after the resolving clause and insert the part printed in *italic*]

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## 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, traveled through the Caribbean Sea, and up the eastern coast~~

of the United States between September 10 and September 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 structures 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

*Whereas the Okeechobee Hurricane, also known as Hurricane San Felipe Segundo, formed in the Atlantic Ocean, traveled through the Caribbean Sea, and up the eastern coast*

*of the United States between September 10 and September 20, 1928;*

*Whereas on September 16, 1928, the Okeechobee Hurricane made landfall in the continental United States at Palm Beach County, 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 approximately 3,000 lives in the United States and its territories;*

*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 Nation and the State of Florida have taken steps to respond to the Okeechobee Hurricane and other storm events with the construction of storm damage reduction projects to mitigate the loss of life and property;*

*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 structures 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 catastrophic loss of life and poses grave economic and environmental consequences to the surrounding communities; 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;*

1           (2) recognizes the enduring importance of hur-  
2           ricane preparedness measures, enhanced evacuation,  
3           emergency plans, and disaster response training in  
4           economically disadvantaged communities to prevent  
5           a disproportionate impact of natural disasters and  
6           disparities in disaster response;

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

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

20          (5) urges the Federal Government and State  
21          and local governments to—

22                  (A) commemorate and memorialize the  
23                  80th anniversary of Okeechobee Hurricane of  
24                  1928 and its associated tragic loss of more than

1 4,000 lives in the United States and its terri-  
2 tories;

3 (B) appropriately recognize mass graves of  
4 the victims of the Okeechobee Hurricane;

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

11 (D) take appropriate actions to encourage  
12 hurricane and disaster preparedness, education,  
13 response, and mitigation; and

14 (E) support programs and initiatives which  
15 promote disaster preparedness, education, re-  
16 sponse, and mitigation in economically dis-  
17 advantaged and migrant communities; and

18 (6) recommits itself to hurricane preparedness,  
19 safety education, response, and mitigation for all  
20 communities in the 110th Congress.

21 *That the House of Representatives—*

22 (1) memorializes the tragic loss of approximately  
23 3,000 lives in the United States and its territories  
24 due to the Okeechobee Hurricane of 1928;

1           (2) recognizes the enduring importance of hurri-  
2           cane preparedness measures, enhanced evacuation,  
3           emergency plans, and disaster response training espe-  
4           cially in economically disadvantaged communities to  
5           prevent a disproportionate impact of natural disas-  
6           ters and disparities in disaster response;

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

15          (4) fully supports initiatives to enhance our un-  
16          derstanding of storm impacts on physical structures,  
17          including water management systems and other in-  
18          frastructure that may be vulnerable to the most in-  
19          tense of storms;

20          (5) urges the State of Florida and local govern-  
21          ments to—

22                  (A) commemorate and memorialize the 80th  
23                  anniversary of the Okeechobee Hurricane of 1928  
24                  and its associated tragic loss of approximately

1           *3,000 lives in the United States and its terri-*  
2           *ories; and*

3                   *(B) appropriately recognize mass graves of*  
4           *the victims of the Okeechobee Hurricane;*

5           *(6) urges the Federal government, and State and*  
6           *local governments, to—*

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

10                   *(B) support programs and initiatives that*  
11           *promote disaster preparedness, education, re-*  
12           *sponse, and mitigation especially in economi-*  
13           *cally disadvantaged and migrant communities;*

14           *(7) commends the Army Corps of Engineers for*  
15           *its ongoing rehabilitation of the Herbert Hoover Dike*  
16           *and encourages continued collaboration among Fed-*  
17           *eral, State, and local governments toward expeditious*  
18           *completion of the rehabilitation effort; and*

19           *(8) recommits itself to hurricane preparedness,*  
20           *safety education, response, and mitigation for all*  
21           *communities in the 110th Congress.*

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## **RESOLUTION**

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SEPTEMBER 17, 2008

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