

Regular Session, 2014

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 136

BY REPRESENTATIVES SMITH, BARROW, AND ST. GERMAIN

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Department of Economic Development to encourage new and existing Louisiana companies to create strategies aimed to increase the number of women employed in STEM positions.

WHEREAS, STEM is an acronym and term referring to the fields of study in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics; and

WHEREAS, schools across the state of Louisiana have recognized that STEM disciplines are the key to high-wage paying jobs across the country; and

WHEREAS, studies have frequently shown that the pay gap between women and men in Louisiana is among the largest in the country; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Women's Policy and Research Commission is the state commission charged with monitoring the status of Louisiana women for the purpose of evaluating their economic, educational, and health issues, identifying and analyzing trends that impact women's health and prosperity, and providing policy recommendations to address the challenges faced by women in our state; and

WHEREAS, research of the commission finds a current achievement gap between males and females in STEM disciplines in Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, nationally, the wage gap between men and women improved slightly from 2011 to 2012 and according to the latest United States census data, women now earn seventy-eight and eight tenths cents on average to every dollar a man makes; and

WHEREAS, during this time period from 2011 to 2012, the gender wage gap in Louisiana actually widened and in 2012, Louisiana women working full time, year-round earned just sixty-six and nine tenths cents for every dollar earned by a Louisiana man; and

WHEREAS, in 2012, the Louisiana gender wage gap was thirty-three percent, a gap two cents greater than in 2011; and

WHEREAS, the disparity in earnings between Louisiana women and men has consistently ranked Louisiana forty-ninth or fiftieth among the fifty states and the District of Columbia and in 2012, Louisiana was again fiftieth; and

WHEREAS, research of the commission finds that the gender wage gap tends to be narrower in STEM disciplines and the wages are higher than in other fields; and

WHEREAS, the commission seeks to further the progress of women in our state by increasing the number of women employed in STEM positions; and

WHEREAS, special emphasis has been given to education reform measures implemented in our K-12 curriculum, such as mentoring programs and clubs supporting STEM that specifically encourage young women to pursue STEM disciplines; and

WHEREAS, the same special emphasis given to education reform measures to encourage young women into STEM disciplines should necessarily be included in the strategies of Louisiana companies to encourage women to pursue STEM careers, thereby increasing the number of women in STEM positions; and

WHEREAS, companies relocating to Louisiana can show their commitment to women in STEM by encouraging the diversity of their current staff and by working with educational systems in Louisiana to promote women in STEM positions; and

WHEREAS, the state should continue to encourage Louisiana firms offering STEM-related jobs to make these jobs known to students and graduates through both the Louisiana Connects and Star Jobs computer systems; and

WHEREAS, these portals have the potential to be essential two-way communication links between students, graduates, and employers, providing students and graduates with insight into available STEM jobs and the motivation to achieve academically in order to qualify for these careers; and

WHEREAS, through a collective effort between the Louisiana Women's Policy and Research Commission, the Louisiana Legislative Women's Caucus, the Office on Women's Policy, the Louisiana Department of Education, the Louisiana Board of Regents, and Louisiana Economic Development, there can be a strong commitment to seeing an increase in the number of women studying and working in STEM disciplines by crafting recruitment strategies highlighting STEM positions as open and available to women.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Department of Economic Development to encourage new and existing Louisiana companies to create strategies aimed to increase the number of women employed in STEM positions.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the secretary of the Department of Economic Development.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE