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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 526 Session of  
2024

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INTRODUCED BY STENDER, STEHR, MARCELL, CAUSER, HAMM, SOLOMON,  
GALLAGHER AND SCHLOSSBERG, SEPTEMBER 19, 2024

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY  
PREPAREDNESS, SEPTEMBER 19, 2024

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A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Joint State Government Commission to conduct a  
2 comprehensive study and assessment on the need, readiness and  
3 current state of operations of the Commonwealth's urban  
4 search and rescue capabilities and identify vulnerabilities,  
5 gaps and areas of necessary and appropriate improvement.

6 WHEREAS, Pennsylvania currently has one Urban Search and  
7 Rescue Task Force (USRTF), PA-TF1, which is one of twenty-eight  
8 existing task forces operating across the United States, all of  
9 which operate entirely through Federal operations funding; and

10 WHEREAS, The USRTF has been stationed in Philadelphia since  
11 1998; and

12 WHEREAS, The USRTF initially started as a counterterrorism  
13 task force upon its founding but has since expanded to include  
14 an all-hazards approach dealing with flooding, earthquakes and  
15 other emergency disasters; and

16 WHEREAS, The last study conducted to review the status of the  
17 Commonwealth's USRTF apparatus was conducted in November 2001;  
18 and

19 WHEREAS, The information gathered on the Commonwealth's USRTF

1 apparatus under the 2001 study is outdated and not in line with  
2 the National Incident Management System; and

3 WHEREAS, The 2001 report indicated individual agencies and  
4 businesses throughout this Commonwealth should develop  
5 strategies for dealing with emergencies in line with USRTF  
6 recommendations to suit their individual circumstances; and

7 WHEREAS, The 2001 report found that development of mutual aid  
8 programs across different counties in conjunction with  
9 Pennsylvania would be critical to strengthening Pennsylvania's  
10 response to emergency disasters; and

11 WHEREAS, The report also indicated the following:

12 (1) Security measures for critical infrastructure need  
13 to be developed for bridges, roads, power stations, airports,  
14 dockyards and more to ensure continuity of communications and  
15 the ability to transport aid throughout this Commonwealth  
16 during disaster emergencies.

17 (2) The implementation of a tiered response system  
18 combined with adequately trained staff should be implemented.

19 (3) The increased use of cyberware presents a need for  
20 the implementation of a cyber protection policy to ensure the  
21 safe operation of the Commonwealth's emergency response and  
22 communications system.

23 (4) The Commonwealth should identify critical areas that  
24 may be vulnerable to biological attacks such as chemicals,  
25 pathogens or viruses and should implement policies to  
26 mitigate possible spreading of these contagions to other  
27 parts of this Commonwealth.

28 (5) The Commonwealth should have appropriate  
29 infrastructure and protocols in place in the event of a  
30 nuclear strike, including protocols for evacuation, remote

1 governance capabilities and eventual cleanup measures, among  
2 various other factors;  
3 therefore be it

4 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives direct the Joint  
5 State Government Commission to conduct a comprehensive review  
6 and study on the Commonwealth's urban search and rescue  
7 capabilities in conjunction with the Federal Emergency  
8 Management Agency's user standards.