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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2014

H O U S E R E S O L U T I O N

COMMEMORATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF PRESIDENT LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON'S STATE OF THE UNION SPEECH ON JANUARY 8, 1964, IN WHICH HE DECLARED A "WAR ON POVERTY" AND INTRODUCED LEGISLATION TO DECREASE HUNGER AND POVERTY IN THE UNITED STATES, AND TO INCREASE ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTHCARE AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Introduced By: Representatives McNamara, Mattiello, Handy, Ajello, and Malik

Date Introduced: January 08, 2014

Referred To: House read and passed

1 WHEREAS, In a nation as abundantly blessed as the United States is, and has been, in
2 important resources such as high quality farm land and abundant food production, as well as
3 being rich in energy resources and a high quality standard of living for most, it is immoral and
4 unethical to leave behind millions of people who suffer daily living in substandard housing, are
5 malnourished, and have little to no access to decent healthcare. A substantial majority of those
6 living in the shadows of life are women and the children they are raising; and

7 WHEREAS, In 1964 America had an astonishingly high poverty rate of 19 percent,
8 despite the Post-World War Two economic boom that produced a strong economy from the late
9 1940s to the late 1960s. It was precisely this economic inequality that concerned President
10 Lyndon Johnson, and many millions of American people, in 1964 when President Johnson
11 declared a "War on Poverty". President Johnson introduced numerous pieces of legislation that
12 became law and are recognized today by most as having been monumentally influential in
13 reducing the rate of poverty in America; and

14 WHEREAS, Medicare and Medicaid were passed in 1965 and, as a result, all of our
15 senior citizens aged 65 and older are guaranteed access to hospital care, and low-income people
16 for the first time in American history attained access to healthcare services. The Food Stamp Act
17 guaranteed that most people living in poverty would receive supplemental aid in order to feed
18 themselves and their loved ones living with them. Head Start was a life-changing law that when

1 passed, guaranteed that at-risk poor children would receive early access to education as a way to
2 help them and their families avoid repeating the cycle of poverty that is harming so many of our
3 communities. President Johnson also passed other significant anti-poverty laws such as the Job
4 Corps, the Community Action Program, and Volunteers in Service to America; and

5 WHEREAS, In the decade following the passage of these landmark "War on Poverty"
6 laws, the poverty rate in America decreased from 19% to 11.1% and has remained between
7 11.1% and 15.2% ever since. However, much more still needs to be done, as can be seen in the
8 highly praised documentary "Inequality for all", a documentary that shows that despite the gains
9 made in the struggle against poverty in the last 50 years, America still tragically has millions of
10 people who are malnourished, live in substandard housing or are homeless, and lack access to
11 decent healthcare. This documentary will be hosted by Rhode Island House Speaker Gordon D.
12 Fox and Rhode Island Senate President M. Teresa Paiva Weed today, January 8, 2014, in the
13 House Lounge at the Rise of the House and Senate. This documentary is being shown at State
14 Legislatures across the nation in honor of the 50th Anniversary of the War on Poverty. This
15 documentary was presented at the Sundance Film Festival by the distinguished economist, author,
16 professor and former Secretary of Labor for President Clinton, Robert Reich. It won a United
17 States Documentary Special Jury Award for Achievement in Filmmaking; now, therefore be it

18 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island and
19 Providence Plantations hereby commemorates the 50th Anniversary of the "War on Poverty" that
20 was declared on January 8, 1964 by President Lyndon Baines Johnson; and be it further

21 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of state be and hereby is authorized and directed to
22 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to Neera Tanden, President of the Center for
23 American Progress.

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