

Senate Resolution No. 1777

By Senators Haley, Faust-Goudeau, Francisco, Hawk, Hensley, Kelly and Pettey

1-29

1 A RESOLUTION commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the War on
2 Poverty.

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4 WHEREAS, President Lyndon B. Johnson recognized that all
5 American citizens deserve some basic measure of security, and that
6 everyone who works hard deserves an opportunity; and

7 WHEREAS, In President Johnson's 1964 State of the Union speech,
8 he declared an "unconditional war on poverty," marking the first time the
9 federal government had ever launched an aggressive program to eliminate
10 poverty; and

11 WHEREAS, President Johnson had laudable goals to create new
12 avenues of opportunity through jobs and education, expand access to
13 health care for seniors, the poor and Americans with disabilities and help
14 working families make ends meet. The State of Kansas strives to achieve
15 these important goals today; and

16 WHEREAS, The Office of Economic Opportunity created a large
17 number of new programs in 1964, including Head Start, the Job Corps,
18 Legal Services, community health centers, community development
19 corporations and Volunteers in Service to America; and

20 WHEREAS, Major initiatives of the War on Poverty included the
21 creation of Medicare and Medicaid, the introduction of Supplemental
22 Nutrition Assistance Program and the expansion of social security
23 benefits; and

24 WHEREAS, These programs caused the poverty rate in the United
25 States to decline from approximately 19% in 1964 to 10.1% in 1973.
26 Today, the national poverty rate is 15%. The poverty rate in Kansas in
27 1969 was 10.7%, then decreased to 9.6% in 1979, and today is
28 approximately 14%; and

29 WHEREAS, The War on Poverty cut poverty nearly in half over the
30 last 50 years, and kept 41 million people, including 9 million children,
31 out of poverty in 2012. Poverty-reducing programs such as nutrition
32 assistance and tax credits for working families have been found to yield
33 lasting gains in children's later health and education. The introduction of
34 the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and
35 Children improved infant health, especially in high poverty areas where
36 participation rates were highest; and

1 WHEREAS, Work to improve poverty rates still needs to be done, as
2 Kansas has not yielded the same results as the rest of the nation has in
3 decreasing poverty rates. Child poverty has increased 53% since 1970,
4 with approximately 133,556 children living in poverty today.
5 Approximately 52,730 of those children live in extreme poverty. The
6 percent of uninsured children in Kansas is 9.4%; and

7 WHEREAS, Kansas can revitalize communities stricken by the recent
8 economic crisis as well as communities that were hurting before it began
9 by expanding economic opportunity, stemming the tide and strengthening
10 families; and

11 WHEREAS, Kansas ranks 42nd in the nation for per capita state and
12 local government expenditures for public welfare programs, spending
13 approximately \$1,181 per capita, while the national per capita is
14 approximately \$1,476. Kansas ranks 33rd in the nation for number of
15 Medicare enrollees and 35th in the nation for number of Medicaid
16 enrollees. Kansas is 29th in the nation for percent of population receiving
17 public aid, with approximately 2.9% of the population receiving public
18 aid, compared to the national percentage of 4% of the population; and

19 WHEREAS, Kansas has approximately 36,702 recipients of
20 Temporary Assistance to Needy Families payments, which represents
21 0.8% of the national total. 14.5% of Kansas households have a food
22 insecurity and Kansas ranks 36th in the nation for the number of recipients
23 of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits; and

24 WHEREAS, Kansas has expanded economic opportunities, and
25 Kansas is now in the top ten in employment, is listed among the top ten
26 best states in which to make a living and top ten for the lowest cost of
27 living; and

28 WHEREAS, The economic crisis has hit low-income Kansas families
29 particularly hard. Kansas can help these people through the crisis by
30 making sure they have the resources they need to put food on the table
31 and keep a roof over their heads; and

32 WHEREAS, Kansas recognizes the difficulties families face when one
33 parent is absent. Kansas is committed to responsible parenthood, by
34 supporting parents who are working toward good jobs in promising
35 career pathways. Parents who are struggling in poverty also need support
36 to raise healthy children and Kansas can assist those parents by ensuring
37 that children have nutritious meals to eat at home and at school, so that
38 they grow up healthy and strong; and

39 WHEREAS, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, President
40 John F. Kennedy and other civil rights leaders were instrumental in
41 fighting the War on Poverty, and dedicated their lives to achieving
42 economic opportunity for all Americans and making the United States a
43 more livable nation for all income levels; and

1 WHEREAS, Poverty and hardship levels remain high, with 16 million
2 people living below the poverty line in 2012. A safety net that included
3 rising education levels, higher employment among women, and smaller
4 families helped push poverty down, but growing income inequality, rising
5 numbers of single-parent families and worsening labor market prospects
6 for less-skilled workers have pushed in the other direction; and

7 WHEREAS, President Barack Obama has urged Americans to keep
8 fighting the War on Poverty, which means helping our businesses create
9 new jobs with stronger wages and benefits, expanding access to education
10 and health care, rebuilding those communities on the outskirts of hope
11 and construct new ladders of opportunity for our people to climb; and

12 WHEREAS, Kansas is committed to a bipartisan effort to close the
13 income gap, strengthen efforts to reduce poverty and hardship and
14 promote broad economic opportunity: Now, therefore,

15 *Be it resolved by the Senate of the State of Kansas:* That we
16 commemorate the 50th Anniversary of President Johnson's declaration of
17 the War on Poverty; and

18 *Be it further resolved:* That the Secretary of the Senate shall send an
19 enrolled copy of this resolution to Senator Haley.