

By Representatives Lynn and Wiles

House Resolution

A resolution honoring the firefighters, law enforcement and emergency services personnel, and volunteers from within the state and across the nation who assisted the State of Florida in fighting the catastrophic wildfires of 1998.

WHEREAS, the period from April through June of 1998 was the hottest and driest period recorded in the State of Florida in 104 years, which created nearly desert-like conditions in many areas of the state, and, as a result, wildfires exploded around the state, beginning on May 25, 1998, in the Apalachicola National Forest, and

WHEREAS, by the time the wildfires were over on July 22, 1998, nearly 500,000 acres of the state had burned in nearly 2,300 separate fires, which over a few months was an increase of more than 200 percent in the number of wildfires and more than 1,700 percent in the number of acres burned compared to the annual average of each over the previous 5 years, and

WHEREAS, the overall cost of those fires to federal, state, and local government has reached \$160 million and may continue to increase, well over 300 homes were damaged or destroyed, numerous businesses were forced to close or suffered direct damage, an entire county had to be evacuated, and the value of lost timber exceeded \$300 million, and

WHEREAS, the response to the disaster was extraordinary as firefighters, law enforcement and emergency services personnel, and volunteers from communities across this state, both affected and unaffected by the fires, and from across

1 this nation rallied at the various fire sites to help bring
2 the fires to an end, and

3 WHEREAS, eight different fire complexes were
4 established to manage an emergency response that involved 145
5 different fire departments within the state, 150 aircraft, and
6 more than 10,000 firefighters and emergency personnel from 47
7 different states, and

8 WHEREAS, in addition to the cooperative response of all
9 levels of government, the various communities across this
10 state rallied to help those affected by offering not only
11 prayers but also food, clothing, shelter, and any other
12 support necessary at the time, and

13 WHEREAS, the State of Florida owes all who contributed
14 to the fighting of those wildfires a great debt of gratitude
15 for their heroic efforts, NOW, THEREFORE,

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17 Be It Resolved by the House of Representatives of the State of
18 Florida:

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20 That the Florida House of Representatives honors the
21 firefighters, law enforcement and emergency services
22 personnel, and volunteers from within the state and across the
23 nation who assisted the State of Florida in fighting the
24 catastrophic wildfires of 1998, and commends them for their
25 exemplary commitment, perseverance, and courage.

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