

**No. R-386. House concurrent resolution honoring and thanking the individuals, institutions, and organizations who lent their assistance so generously during and after Tropical Storm Irene.**

(H.C.R.294)

Offered by: All Members of the House

Offered by: All Members of the Senate

Whereas, Tropical Storm Irene had an impact on the lives of thousands of Vermonters with both immediate and continuing consequences, and

Whereas, one of the primary victims of Tropical Storm Irene's unwelcomed foray into Vermont was the state office complex in Waterbury, home to the agencies of human services and of natural resources, the department of public safety, and the Vermont State Hospital, and approximately 1,600 state employees, and

Whereas, the rain-swollen Winooski River overflowed its banks at historic levels, precipitating massive flooding on the Waterbury campus, and forcing the state to confront an emergency situation demanding immediate decisions that had significant consequences, and

Whereas, employees of the Vermont State Hospital shuttled patients to alternative care facilities as far away as the Brattleboro Retreat, and

Whereas, under the calm and professional leadership of Vermont State Police Captain Chris Reinfurt, in consultation with Commissioner of Public Safety, Keith Flynn, and Secretary of Administration, Jeb Spaulding, the decision was quickly made and implemented to relocate the emergency

management center to the temporary FEMA office in Burlington whose federal personnel were of enormous help throughout the state, and

Whereas, despite the moving of the center at the worst possible moment, the outstanding Vermont Emergency Management staff was able to provide exemplary support throughout Irene's onslaught, and

Whereas, the displaced state employees in some instances worked from home and were eventually scattered to nearly 40 sites in Chittenden and Washington Counties where they continue to keep state government functioning, and

Whereas, the Agency of Transportation's tally of state-owned transportation infrastructure damaged in Irene's rampage was 146 roads and 34 bridges, totaling 531.77 miles of highway and 2,260 locally owned road segments, and 289 municipal bridges sustained varying degrees of impairment, and

Whereas, the dedicated and exhaustive work of the 700 Vermont transportation personnel enabled the state of Vermont to make passable all but 13 miles of state-owned roads and 28 of the 34 state bridges by early October, and

Whereas, on one of the most devastated roads, Route 107 in Stockbridge, an unbelievably intensive reconstruction work plan condensed 10 years' worth of planning time into six weeks, and a year's worth of construction into a few months, enabling the highway to reopen before the end of 2011, and

Whereas, in order to return the state highway and bridge system to a working, if not ideal, condition as quickly as possible, 20 New Hampshire Department of Transportation personnel and 349 Maine Department of Transportation workers spent several weeks working beside their Vermont colleagues, and

Whereas, innumerable municipal employees worked far more hours than normal to assist the citizens of their affected communities, and

Whereas, special recognition should be paid to the municipal employees and local officials, many of them volunteers, of the many towns that were directly affected, and

Whereas, neighboring towns worked cooperatively in partnership, such as Jamaica and Londonderry; Stratton, Winhall, and Weston; Duxbury and Waterbury; and Rutland and the towns to the immediate east, to address emergency situations and tackle mutual problems in the most effective way, and

Whereas, any legislative resolution recognizing the round-the-clock efforts of municipal employees must pay special tribute to Michael Garofano Sr. and his son, Michael Jr., who sacrificed their lives attempting to preserve the operation of the Rutland city water system, and

Whereas, the role of the National Guard during the post-storm weeks was truly incredible, and this special contingent of individuals included 700 members of the Vermont National Guard and approximately 200 members of

the Maine National Guard, who brought with them 169 pieces of heavy engineering equipment, and

Whereas, additional National Guard personnel and equipment soon arrived from Connecticut, Illinois, New Hampshire, Ohio, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia, including eight National Guard helicopters (Blackhawks and Chinooks) from New Hampshire and Illinois, and

Whereas, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) established a headquarters in Vermont to process claims for financial assistance for individuals whose property was damaged or destroyed due to Tropical Storm Irene or the late spring flooding, and

Whereas, FEMA accepted 8,418 registrations, and 4,035 individuals and families were approved by December 30 for housing assistance, and

Whereas, overall, with respect to federal financial disaster assistance in 2011: \$23.1 million in federal assistance grants was approved for families and individuals; \$18 million was obligated for public assistance funding for four 2011 federal disasters, including Tropical Storm Irene and the spring flooding; \$31.2 million was authorized for United States Small Business Administration low-interest loans, including \$18.8 million in home loans and \$12.4 million in business loans, for a grand total of \$72 million in federal financial support, and

Whereas, the University of Vermont assisted in numerous ways following Tropical Storm Irene, including the UVM Extension which assessed farm damage and needs, delivered emergency feed and bedding, vaccinated animals,

developed fact sheets on handling flooded corn and silage, provided free mycotoxin testing and offered crop and financial planning support, and the College of Agriculture and Life Science worked in conjunction with UVM Extension on many projects; sponsoring three days of service for Irene relief, including on Saturday, October 22, 2011, when over 80 UVM students, faculty, and staff participated in the VT Clean Up Day; and of the four persons who organized VT Response, two are current UVM students, a third a recent alum, and the fourth a student at Champlain College, and

Whereas, the Vermont and New Hampshire Valley American Red Cross operated 13 emergency shelters in the days following the storm and reached out directly to assist the many families who were isolated in the storm's aftermath, and

Whereas, many Vermont utility company customers lost power at some point as the storm cut a swath through the state, including Central Vermont Public Service (CVPS), 73,000; Green Mountain Power Company (GMPC), 40,000; Vermont Electric Cooperative, 10,000; and the Washington Electric Cooperative, 1,200; and Vermonters in some locations also lost landline telephone service, and

Whereas, the storm did not merely disconnect residential and commercial customers but also destroyed long-standing utility rights-of-way, forcing the relocation of the routes transmission lines must travel, and

Whereas, the utilities reacted quickly and decisively to tackle the storm damage as CVPS fielded the largest workforce in the company's history, and GMP effectively doubled its crews' members in the field, and FairPoint Communications, VTel, and Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom each mobilized crews to restore landline telephone service as quickly as possible, and

Whereas, the assistance of colleagues from out-of-state utilities proved invaluable in the process to complete the urgent job of restoring power, and

Whereas, many students from Castleton State College volunteering in the Rutland area, cadets from Norwich University assisting in Northfield, and Long Trail Patrol members from the Green Mountain Club lending a hand in Waterbury and Duxbury as well as southern Vermont were all part of the volunteer effort, and

Whereas, despite the challenge of a severely damaged headquarters, on Wales Street in Rutland, Salvation Army Rutland Commander Major Charles Balcom swiftly acted on the imperative of placing disaster relief assistance in the forefront, and

Whereas, the Salvation Army in Rutland arranged for alternative space at the former Smith Buick GMC site on South Main Street where it opened a flood recovery center, and this alternative location served as a distribution center for clothing, furniture, household goods, and food, and volunteers,

including students from the College of St. Joseph who assisted the Salvation Army personnel in this essential mission, and

Whereas, Vermonters from all walks of life responded with a generosity and kindness to their fellow neighbors in need through direct action and financial contributions to emergency relief funds, and this response was best summarized in a letter from a Virginia National Guardsman to the *Rutland Herald & Times Argus*, writing “From the first day and the first plate of brownies, the local community has been so supportive, thankful and generous that we were all in awe,” now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly honors and thanks the individuals, institutions, and organizations who lent their assistance so generously during and after Tropical Storm Irene.