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**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

**IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2014**

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**SENATE RESOLUTION**

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: Senators Paiva Weed, and Goldin

Date Introduced: January 08, 2014

Referred To: Recommended for Immediate Consideration

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 Senate President M. Teresa  
12 Paiva Weed and Rhode Island House Speaker Gordon D. Fox 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 50<sup>th</sup> 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 Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
19 hereby commemorates the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the "War on Poverty" that was declared on January  
20 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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