

House Resolution 1068

By: Representatives Channell of the 111th, Royal of the 164th, Parrish of the 144th, Coleman of the 142nd, Skipper of the 137th and others

A RESOLUTION

1 Designating Rural Health Day; and for other purposes.

2 WHEREAS, the Georgia Rural Health Association (GRHA) promotes rural health as a
3 distinct and unresolved concern in Georgia, serves as an advocate for rural health by
4 promoting improved health status and an improved health care system for rural Georgians,
5 and encourages the development of appropriate health care resources for residents of rural
6 Georgia; and

7 WHEREAS, some 2.2 million people, approximately one-third of the state's population,
8 reside in Georgia's 117 rural counties; and

9 WHEREAS, rural Georgians have a desire to be heard and understood by their lawmakers,
10 want access to health insurance, and are concerned that their health care systems are in crisis
11 as evidenced by additional rural hospital closures; and

12 WHEREAS, citizens are also concerned about poor health status, lack of access to quality
13 health care providers, and the link between the local economy, health systems, and health
14 status; and

15 WHEREAS, access to capital for aging health care facilities, emergency and nonemergency
16 transportation, equitable reimbursement funding, 100 percent access to care, disease
17 prevention, health care work force development, and hospital authority training are specific
18 needs identified for legislative action by rural Georgians; and

19 WHEREAS, the highest cancer and cardiovascular mortality rates in the state are found
20 primarily in rural counties throughout Georgia; and

21 WHEREAS, infant mortality, child abuse, and teen pregnancy rates are higher in rural areas
22 which are disproportionately impacted by the state's growing uninsured population and a

1 rapidly increasing population of elderly citizens who often suffer from multiple chronic
2 diseases; and

3 WHEREAS, nearly 45 percent of Georgians who reside in households with income below
4 the federal poverty level reside in rural Georgia areas, and these areas have lower education
5 levels and higher dropout rates than the metropolitan areas of the state, causing an adverse
6 effect on the health status of these Georgians; and

7 WHEREAS, rural Georgia areas have only one-half as many physicians per capita as urban
8 Georgia areas while 50 percent of the state's hospitals are located in rural counties, many of
9 which are experiencing financial difficulties; and

10 WHEREAS, Georgia has 98 designated Health Professional Shortage Areas located in rural
11 areas of the state; and

12 WHEREAS, rural Georgia's health care needs far exceed its current provider and resource
13 capacity, and health and health care are connected to the economy and demography of rural
14 communities; and

15 WHEREAS, lack of adequate health care resources and lack of health care workers are
16 deterrents to industry recruitment, since health problems undermine worker and community
17 productivity; and

18 WHEREAS, the Georgia Rural Development Council recognizes health care as a top priority
19 item and understands that the continued decline in the availability and quality of health care
20 facilities and services in rural areas contributes to continued economic distress; and

21 WHEREAS, the many dedicated public and private providers, community leaders, and
22 advocates who work diligently to meet the tremendous needs of rural communities in
23 Georgia richly deserve recognition for and assistance in their efforts to maintain and improve
24 the health status and economic viability of these areas; and

25 WHEREAS, the Georgia Rural Health Association is an advocacy organization which seeks
26 to bring attention to the plight of rural consumers and of those who provide their care; and

27 WHEREAS, this group and many others recognize that rural areas need special attention and
28 consideration in any decisions affecting the health care system and that state and federal

1 officials must seek to have a greater understanding of the problems and needs of rural
2 Georgians.

3 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
4 the members of this body recognize the foregoing by designating February 14, 2002, as
5 "Rural Health Day" and pledge commitment to policies and programs that will support
6 quality, affordable, and accessible health care for rural Georgians.

7 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
8 and directed to transmit an appropriate copy of this resolution to the Georgia Rural Health
9 Association.