

Senate Resolution 428

By: Senator Thomas of the 10th

ADOPTED SENATE

A RESOLUTION

1 Creating the Senate Study Committee on the Shortage of Registered Professional Nurses; and
2 for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, there currently exists a severe nursing shortage with a 13 percent vacancy rate
4 of registered professional nurses working in Georgia, a situation which is exacerbated by the
5 current average age of the workplace nurse being 44 years; and

6 WHEREAS, the shortage of practicing nurses negatively impacts on the budgets of hospitals
7 and other health care facilities which resort to overtime and temporary agency staffing
8 strategies to fill those nursing vacant positions; and

9 WHEREAS, fewer students are pursuing a career in nursing as evidenced by a 20.9 percent
10 decline in the number of nursing students from 1995 to 1999; and

11 WHEREAS, there is an additional education crisis in the profession, given that many
12 members of the state's nursing faculty are approaching retirement age and fewer nurses are
13 pursuing a career in academia; and

14 WHEREAS, there are more demands for services, particularly coming from an increasingly
15 aging population whose health care needs cannot be met if there is no short-term and
16 long-term solution to the shortage of all health providers, but most especially of registered
17 nurses; and

18 WHEREAS, research has shown that the stressful workplace demands placed on a nurse
19 practicing in an environment of chronic shortages contribute to the increased number of
20 nurses suffering from professional burnout, succumbing to risky alcohol and drug-related
21 conduct, and otherwise becoming impaired – all problems which cannot be adequately
22 addressed by the current volunteer peer assistance system for returning colleagues to the
23 profession as productive and healthy nurses; and

1 WHEREAS, Georgia is the only state in the country which does not have some kind of
2 statutory authority allowing nurses in advanced practice to execute prescription drug orders,
3 even on a limited basis, thereby adversely impacting the ability of advanced practice nurses
4 to practice, limiting access to health care in rural and underserved areas, and decreasing the
5 attractiveness of nursing as a profession to those who view becoming an advanced practice
6 nurse as a career step within nursing; and

7 WHEREAS, issues of mandatory overtime, staffing problems, weak patient-protection
8 regulations, patient abandonment concerns, and other professional and labor issues have been
9 cited as contributing to the current nursing shortage.

10 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that there is created the Senate
11 Study Committee on the Shortage of Registered Professional Nurses to be composed of five
12 members of the Senate to be appointed by the President of the Senate who shall designate a
13 member as chairperson of the committee. The chairperson shall call all meetings of the
14 committee and shall invite representatives from the various nurse, hospital, nursing home,
15 medical, and other related associations and other interested parties to attend and give
16 testimony. The committee shall receive staff support from the appropriate office within the
17 Georgia Department of Community Health to assist the committee in its deliberations.

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the committee may conduct such meetings at such
19 places and at such times as it may deem necessary or convenient to enable it to exercise fully
20 and effectively its powers, perform its duties, and accomplish the objectives and purposes
21 of this resolution including, without limitation, a study of the issues contributing to the
22 shortage of registered nurses and possible remedies to that situation, opportunities to increase
23 student enrollment in nursing programs, possible relief to workplace conditions operating
24 as barriers to licensed nursing practice, possible solutions to the current inability of the
25 advanced practice registered nurse to exercise some form of prescriptive authority, and
26 innovative approaches to support impaired nurse programs. The legislative members of the
27 committee shall receive the allowances authorized for legislative members of interim
28 legislative committees but shall receive the same for not more than seven days unless
29 additional days are authorized. The funds necessary to carry out the provisions of this
30 resolution shall come from the funds appropriated to the Senate. In the event the committee
31 makes a report of its findings and recommendations, with suggestions for proposed
32 legislation, if any, such report shall be made on or before December 31, 2002. The
33 committee shall stand abolished on December 31, 2002.