

House Resolution 743

By: Representative Harbin of the 80th

A RESOLUTION

1 Creating the House Study Committee on Adapted Athletics; and for other purposes.

2 WHEREAS, the federal Education for All Handicapped Children Act requires that physical
3 education be made available to every child with a disability who is receiving a free and
4 appropriate education; and

5 WHEREAS, physical education for those with disabilities is made a part of special education
6 under the law and defines the development of physical and motor fitness, fundamental motor
7 skills, and patterns of instruction in aquatics, dance, individual and group games, and sports;
8 and

9 WHEREAS, equitable and appropriate community and interscholastic athletics programs that
10 apply these physical education goals and enhance the physical education curriculum through
11 regular application, which are widely available to the able-bodied, are rarely available either
12 at school or within the community for the physically and visually impaired; and

13 WHEREAS, the overwhelming majority of students who possess a physical or visual
14 impairment will not rise to a level of ability to be integrated appropriately into the traditional
15 athletics programs designed specifically for the able-bodied without changing the very nature
16 of those sports programs; and

17 WHEREAS, there continues to exist widely the incorrect perception that these children are
18 eligible for and are being served by long established, better known programs such as the
19 Special Olympics, which serve the mentally impaired, not the physically impaired, and the
20 Paralympics, which is primarily for adult elite athletes representing the top 2 percent of those
21 who participate in disabled sports nationally, leading to the further obscurity of this unique
22 need for appropriately designed local programs; and

1 WHEREAS, United States Secretary of Education Rod Paige has announced as the United
2 States Department of Education's goal the alignment of the principles of the federal
3 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act with the principles of the federal No Child Left
4 Behind Act by "ensuring accountability, more flexibility, more options for parents, and an
5 emphasis on doing what works to improve student achievement"; and

6 WHEREAS, the benefits of athletic participation are proven to include fostering teamwork,
7 strategic and critical thinking, goal setting skills, and instilling greater self-confidence and
8 a sense of responsibility; and

9 WHEREAS, the benefits of athletic participation can lead to the development of sound
10 character as one who displays a sense of duty to others; and

11 WHEREAS, regular participation in sports leads to greater health through the enhancement
12 of coordination, flexibility, endurance, strength, and fitness and risk reduction for secondary
13 health problems that often plague disabled populations due to inactivity and sedentary
14 lifestyles; and

15 WHEREAS, Georgia reported approximately 13,000 students, ages six to 21, in grades one
16 to 12 served in whole or in part by school special education departments as required under
17 the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act had a visual, orthopedic, or other
18 health impairment; and

19 WHEREAS, the disability athletics model employed by the Georgia based American
20 Association of Adapted Sports Programs (AAASP) developed within the public schools of
21 Georgia has been honored as a semifinalist in The Ford Foundation's Excellence in
22 Government Award administered through the John F. Kennedy School of Government at
23 Harvard University; and

24 WHEREAS, AAASP has gained the recognition, support, partnership, and endorsement of
25 America's largest professional membership organization of adapted physical educators, the
26 American Association for Active Lifestyles and Fitness, a member of the American Alliance
27 for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance; and

28 WHEREAS, AAASP has received national attention as a model for complying with federal
29 mandates, including the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which requires
30 children with disabilities to be given equal opportunities as their able-bodied peers; and

1 WHEREAS, AAASP has demonstrated outcomes showing that participation in adapted
2 athletics has positively affected behavioral problems, depression, academic performance,
3 drop out rates, and the pursuit of higher education or meaningful employment after
4 graduation among Georgia students with disabilities; and

5 WHEREAS, the Georgia High School Association and AAASP have formed an alliance
6 whereby the Georgia High School Association has recognized AAASP as the governing and
7 sanctioning body for interscholastic adapted athletics in Georgia's schools and looks to
8 AAASP for guidance in orchestrating adapted sports for students with physical or visual
9 impairments; and

10 WHEREAS, AAASP has, since 1977, successfully created and maintained state-wide
11 leagues in cooperation with its member schools and community partners for students who
12 are ambulatory or who use assistive devices for mobility including wheelchairs or who have
13 a visual impairment; and

14 WHEREAS, the AAASP model is designed to serve every student whose primary disability
15 is physical or visual in nature and who desires to participate fully and receive his or her
16 athletic letter in wheelchair basketball, indoor wheelchair soccer, beep basketball for the
17 blind, power wheelchair hockey for the more severely handicapped, and track and field for
18 all ability levels of physical or visual impairment; and

19 WHEREAS, within AAASP leagues, the long desired outcomes for school and community
20 inclusion is observed to be occurring most naturally and under a least restrictive environment
21 due in large part to the mutual desire of able-bodied and disabled students to interact socially
22 together during and after school now that sports participation has been extended to the
23 disabled, creating a common thread to the shared values of team loyalty, school pride, and
24 competitive excellence; and

25 WHEREAS, AAASP maintains the long honored traditions and philosophies of amateur
26 athletics and recognizes the desired outcomes of school sport as a part of the educational
27 goals of schools; and

28 WHEREAS, Georgia seeks a way in which to fund appropriately the state governing body
29 AAASP in order to expand athletic opportunity to all its students with physical or visual
30 impairments; provide for the training of needed coaches, officials, coordinators, and teachers
31 in adapted sports; and educate our community agencies in ways to support school programs

1 locally, manage the league schedules, and staff and promote adapted sports as a fully
2 integrated part of Georgia's educational commitment to Leave No Child Behind.

3 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
4 there is created the House Study Committee on Adapted Athletics to be composed of seven
5 members: three members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the
6 House of Representatives; the president of the Georgia High School Association or his or her
7 designee; the president of the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders or his or her
8 designee; and two citizens of the state appointed by the Speaker of the House of
9 Representatives, one of whom shall be a person involved in adapted athletics as a coach,
10 official, coordinator, or teacher and one of whom shall be a parent of a child who participates
11 in adapted athletics. The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall designate a member
12 of the House of Representatives to serve as chairperson of the committee. The committee
13 shall meet at the call of the chairperson.

14 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the committee shall undertake a study of the issues
15 mentioned above and any other issues related thereto and recommend any actions or
16 legislation which the committee deems necessary or appropriate. The committee may
17 conduct such meetings at such places and at such times as it may deem necessary or
18 convenient to enable it to exercise fully and effectively its powers, perform its duties, and
19 accomplish the objectives and purposes of this resolution. The members of the committee
20 shall receive the allowances authorized for legislative members of interim legislative
21 committees but shall receive the same for not more than five days unless additional days are
22 authorized. Citizen members shall receive a daily expense allowance in the amount specified
23 in subsection (b) of Code Section 45-7-21 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated as well
24 as the mileage or transportation allowance authorized for state employees. The funds
25 necessary to carry out the provisions of this resolution shall come from the funds
26 appropriated to the House of Representatives. In the event the committee makes a report of
27 its findings and recommendations, with suggestions for proposed legislation, if any, such
28 report shall be made on or before December 31, 2003. The committee shall stand abolished
29 on December 31, 2003.