

Senate Resolution 598

By: Senator Thomas of the 2nd

### A RESOLUTION

1 Creating the Joint Nuclear Plant Vogtle Environmental Justice Issues Study Committee; and  
2 for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, Plant Vogtle consists of two nuclear reactors that have been operating since  
4 1987 and 1989 and is located along the Savannah River in Burke County near Waynesboro,  
5 Georgia, approximately 26 miles southeast of Augusta; and

6 WHEREAS, the community surrounding Plant Vogtle is home to an exceptionally high  
7 percentage of both African American and low-income households; and

8 WHEREAS, four counties within 40 miles of Plant Vogtle have areas that are persistently  
9 distressed and suffer from unemployment or poverty; and

10 WHEREAS, any effect on the community surrounding Plant Vogtle as a whole results in a  
11 disproportionately high impact on both minority and low-income households; and

12 WHEREAS, the federal government requires emergency evacuation procedures for all  
13 nuclear power reactors, and the Hurricane Katrina disaster revealed that low-income and  
14 minority populations are particularly vulnerable in emergency evacuation situations; and

15 WHEREAS, in the Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Mixed Oxide Fuel  
16 Fabrication Facility at the Savannah River Site, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
17 acknowledged that a significant accident would most likely disproportionately affect  
18 minority or low-income communities due to the demographics and prevailing wind in the  
19 area; Plant Vogtle is adjacent to the Savannah River Site and, therefore, a significant accident  
20 at the site could have a similar disparate impact on these low-income and minority  
21 communities; and

1 WHEREAS, radiological monitoring programs reveal that Savannah River fish, particularly  
2 resident game fish species, are contaminated with cesium 137. Large mouth bass are  
3 contaminated with cesium 137 and are a target species of subsistence fishermen on the  
4 Savannah River. Recreationally important fish species in the vicinity of Plant Vogtle  
5 routinely have been found to have detectable levels of cesium 137 in the edible flesh of  
6 collected samples; and

7 WHEREAS, African American and low-income individuals are at specific heightened risk  
8 from hazardous materials in the Savannah River, and although individuals from all  
9 socioeconomic backgrounds engage in fishing in the area, African Americans in particular  
10 commonly engage in subsistence fishing along the Savannah River and have a higher than  
11 average consumption of fish, frequently surpassing allowable contaminated fish consumption  
12 levels.

13 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF  
14 GEORGIA that there is created the Joint Nuclear Plant Vogtle Environmental Justice Issues  
15 Study Committee to study the negative impacts on the surrounding community of Plant  
16 Vogtle, with added focus on low-income and minority populations, and recommend how  
17 these impacts can be alleviated. The committee shall be composed of three members of the  
18 Senate to be appointed by the President of the Senate and seven members of the House of  
19 Representatives to be appointed by the Speaker of the House. At least half of such total  
20 appointed committee members shall be African American and at least half of such total  
21 appointed committee members shall be located in counties within 100 miles of Plant Vogtle.  
22 The President of the Senate and Speaker of the House shall each designate a member of the  
23 committee as cochairperson of the committee. The cochairpersons shall call all meetings of  
24 the committee.

25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the committee shall undertake a study of the conditions,  
26 needs, and issues mentioned above or related thereto and recommend any action or  
27 legislation which the committee deems necessary or appropriate. The committee may  
28 conduct such meetings at such places and at such times as it may deem necessary or  
29 convenient to enable it to exercise fully and effectively its powers, perform its duties, and  
30 accomplish the objectives and purposes of this resolution. The members of the committee  
31 shall receive the allowances provided for in Code Section 28-1-8 of the Official Code of  
32 Georgia Annotated. The allowances authorized by this resolution shall not be received by  
33 any member of the committee for more than five days unless additional days are authorized.  
34 The funds necessary to carry out the provisions of this resolution shall come from the funds

1 appropriated to the Senate and the House of Representatives. In the event the committee  
2 makes a report of its findings and recommendations, with suggestions for proposed  
3 legislation, if any, such report shall be made on or before the convening of the 2008 session  
4 of the General Assembly, at which time the committee shall stand abolished.