

MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE

2006 Regular Session

To: Rules

By: Senator(s) Hewes, Browning, Butler, Carmichael, Chaney, Clarke, Dearing, Frazier, Gollott, Harden, Hyde-Smith, Jackson (11th), Jackson (15th), Jackson (32nd), Jordan, King, Mettetal, Pickering, Posey, Ross, Simmons, Thames, Thomas, Walls, White

Senate Concurrent Resolution 538

(As Adopted by Senate and House)

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING CELLULAR SOUTH NETWORK FOR PERFORMING EXEMPLARY SERVICE ON THE MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST DURING THE HURRICANE KATRINA CRISIS.

WHEREAS, founded in 1988, Cellular South is the nation's largest privately held wireless company and the only wireless company headquartered in Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, Cellular South announced that its wireless network in South Mississippi, including the Mississippi Gulf Coast, was fully operational as of Friday, September 9, 2005, three days earlier than previously estimated. Despite Hurricane Katrina's destruction, the Mississippi-based company never lost service in parts of the most storm-ravaged areas, particularly in Hattiesburg and Biloxi and had teams in place that began immediate repairs of cell sites and infrastructure following the storm; and

WHEREAS, on Monday, August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina, a Category Four Hurricane, crashed with unrelenting and violent force onto the entire Mississippi Gulf Coast, making landfall at or around Waveland, Mississippi. In one day, the worst natural disaster in our history struck us a grievous blow, leaving a 90-mile swath of destruction along the coast and causing severe damage throughout central and north Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, the reliability of the Cellular South network after the storm is reflected in the fact that the company has seen a 256 percent increase in the number of minutes carried on behalf of other carriers' customers since the storm in the affected area. The increase equates to more than 8.5 million minutes of usage (MOUs) from other carriers' customers, following the storm; and

WHEREAS, "Cellular South employees, some of whom were dealing with their own personal losses, knew that communication was critical for hurricane victims and evacuees and they did everything they could to fully restore our customers' ability to reach loved ones or call for emergency help in the aftermath of the storm," said Hu Meena, company president. "As just one example, The Washington Post noted in one of its stories a Cellular South network technician in Biloxi who literally crawled out of his home that had been destroyed by a fallen tree, got his family to safety and then traveled to the nearest cell site to begin repair work;" and

WHEREAS, Cellular South utilized 300 generators and 20,000 gallons of fuel, as well as over 400 employees dedicated to restoring the network as quickly as possible. Through the dedication and hard work of the team, the network was restored ahead of schedule, and reported record minutes of use upon

restoration of service. Cellular South donated over 1,000 phones to local, state and federal officials who worked and are still working to rebuild Mississippi, as well as to many Red Cross Shelters so that hurricane victims would have a way to communicate with their loved ones. Cellular South donated a total of 50 million free relief minutes to customers in the hardest hit of areas; and

WHEREAS, while it is still early to complete a full assessment, estimates indicate the financial impact of Hurricane Katrina on Cellular South are likely to be in the range of \$8 to \$12 Million Dollars; and yet, the company's goal was to do whatever it took to restore service for customers and take care of employees - both those affected by Hurricane Katrina and those working to restore wireless service:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That

we do hereby commend the executives and employees of Cellular South for their exemplary service, conduct and performance rendered prior to and subsequent to Hurricane Katrina's unprecedented destruction on and near the Mississippi Gulf Coast in August and September, 2005, and we offer our thanks to these individuals for their assistance in providing communications during this critical time, as we endeavor to rebuild our state and restore its economy.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be forwarded to Mr. Hu Meena, President of Cellular South, and be made available to the Capitol Press Corps.