

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 3036

Introduced by

Representatives Mock, P. Anderson, Beadle, Rich S. Becker, Blum, Boehning, Boschee, Carlson, Damschen, Delmore, Dobervich, Ertelt, Guggisberg, Hanson, Hogan, Holman, Howe, M. Johnson, Johnston, Kading, Kasper, Kiefert, B. Koppelman, K. Koppelman, Marschall, McWilliams, Mitskog, Monson, O'Brien, Olson, Owens, Paur, Pyle, Roers Jones, Sanford, Schneider, Schreiber-Beck, Skroch, Trottier, Vetter

Senators Campbell, Casper, Clemens, Davison, Dotzenrod, Heckaman, Holmberg, Kreun, Laffen, G. Lee, J. Lee, Luick, Mathern, Meyer, Myrdal, Nelson, Osland, Piepkorn, Robinson, Roers, Sorvaag, Wardner

(Approved by the Delayed Bills Committee)

1 A concurrent resolution commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the Red River flood of
2 1997.

3 **WHEREAS**, the record-setting North Dakota winter of 1996-97 featured eight named
4 blizzards resulting in record snowfall accumulations for Grand Forks, Fargo, and Bismarck; and

5 **WHEREAS**, on February 14, 1997, the National Weather Service predicted severe flooding
6 along the Red River of the North, including all tributaries, between Wahpeton and Pembina,
7 North Dakota, and subsequently projected flood crests of 17.9 feet in Wahpeton, 38 feet in
8 Fargo, and 49 feet in Grand Forks; and

9 **WHEREAS**, Blizzard "Hannah" on April 5-6, 1997, caused an estimated loss of 90,000 head
10 of cattle, downed the 2,060-foot KXJB-TV broadcast tower, toppled nearly 6,000 power poles,
11 and forced approximately 90,000 homes to be without electricity; and

12 **WHEREAS**, flood waters along the Red River crested at 19.42 feet on April 6, 1997, and
13 19.25 feet on April 15, 1997, in Wahpeton and 39.72 feet on April 18, 1997, in Fargo; and

14 **WHEREAS**, on April 7, 1997, President Bill Clinton issued a major disaster declaration, as
15 requested by Governor Ed Schafer, for severe flooding in all counties in North Dakota; and

16 **WHEREAS**, on April 16, 1997, Grand Forks Mayor Pat Owens recommended residents
17 voluntarily evacuate the city; and

18 **WHEREAS**, on April 18, 1997, dikes in Grand Forks, North Dakota and East Grand Forks,
19 Minnesota began to be overtopped, including Lincoln Park, Central Park, and Riverside Park
20 neighborhoods, leading Mayor Owens to order the evacuation of over 50,000 people, which, up
21 to that time, was the largest civilian evacuation in the United States since Atlanta, Georgia in
22 1864 during the American Civil War; and

1 **WHEREAS**, the flood waters pushed miles beyond the banks of the Red River, swamping
2 fields, roads, and towns, submerging an area roughly the size of Delaware; and

3 **WHEREAS**, the flood waters in Grand Forks were 4 feet deep throughout downtown,
4 covered rooftops in some neighborhoods, reached inland approximately 3 miles, and ultimately
5 damaged 9,001 homes and 751 businesses; and

6 **WHEREAS**, the Grand Forks water treatment plant failed on the morning of April 19, 1997,
7 leaving residents without water for 13 days and without potable water for 23 days; and

8 **WHEREAS**, on April 19, 1997, a fire started at the Security Building in a flooded downtown
9 Grand Forks, spread over 3 city blocks, and destroyed 11 historic buildings over the course of
10 two days; and

11 **WHEREAS**, the Red River crested in Grand Forks on April 22, 1997, at the historic high
12 water mark of 54.35 feet after which the river level did not fall below 49 feet until April 26, with
13 the river finally receding below flood stage of 28 feet on May 23, 1997; and

14 **WHEREAS**, on April 22, 1997, President Bill Clinton, Senators Kent Conrad and Byron
15 Dorgan, and Congressman Earl Pomeroy, visited Grand Forks Air Force Base and committed
16 \$488 million in federal assistance; and

17 **WHEREAS**, Red River flood waters ultimately inundated approximately 2,200 square miles
18 of land, resulted in the evacuation of 70,000 residents, and caused approximately \$4 billion
19 worth of damage; and

20 **WHEREAS**, the Grand Forks Air Force Base provided instrumental support throughout the
21 disaster, including serving as a shelter for 3,500 evacuees and a medical shelter for more than
22 400 civilian patients, assembling approximately 800,000 of the 3.5 million sandbags used by the
23 city of Grand Forks, and providing military equipment for fire suppression, evacuation, and
24 civilian transport; and

25 **WHEREAS**, 694 homes and 493 other structures in Grand Forks were demolished following
26 the flood, an additional 850 properties were purchased and demolished through a voluntary
27 buyout program, and 161 homes and 414 structures were relocated to other properties to make
28 space for permanent flood protection; and

29 **WHEREAS**, in addition to the more than \$48 million in damage to University of North
30 Dakota buildings, 16 of the 22 schools owned by Grand Forks Public School District suffered a
31 total \$72 million in damages, including 3 schools which suffered catastrophic damage; and

1 **WHEREAS**, disaster recovery funding from all sources exceeded \$567 million, including
2 more than \$34 million in state and local funding; and

3 **WHEREAS**, following the disaster, the administrations of Governor Ed Schafer and
4 Governor John Hoeven and the Legislative Assemblies throughout the decade following the
5 flood continued to provide support for the cleanup, restoration, and flood prevention efforts in
6 the Red River Valley; and

7 **WHEREAS**, in January 2007, the \$409 million Grand Forks Flood Prevention Project was
8 completed, featuring approximately 8 miles of levees and walls expandable to protect against a
9 63-foot flood, 20 miles of recreational trails, two pedestrian bridges, and 2,200 acres of green
10 space; and

11 **WHEREAS**, as a result of the Red River flood of 1997, the National Weather Service has
12 changed its flood forecasting methodology, increased the number of monitoring gauges,
13 updated satellite imagery, and revised surveys of the Red River channel; and

14 **WHEREAS**, major capital projects in the Red River Valley, including the \$19 million Grand
15 Forks County office building, the \$104 million Ralph Engelstad Arena, and the \$16 million
16 downtown Corporate Center, were built using flood mitigation designs such as raised
17 foundations, elevated utility rooms, and integrated dewatering systems; and

18 **WHEREAS**, the City of Grand Forks has adopted other flood-stricken communities across
19 the country to assist in flood prevention and management practices, including St. Bernard
20 Parish, Louisiana; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Minot, North Dakota; Findley, Ohio; and Biloxi,
21 Mississippi; and

22 **WHEREAS**, flood mitigation lessons learned from the Red River flood of 1997 have been
23 applied to city plans and flood prevention projects in communities throughout the Upper
24 Midwest, including the cities of Valley City, Bismarck, Minot, Wahpeton, and Fargo;

25 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF**
26 **NORTH DAKOTA, THE SENATE CONCURRING THEREIN:**

27 That the Sixty-fifth Legislative Assembly recognizes the hard work exhibited by all
28 communities impacted by winter storms and flooding during the winter of 1996 and the spring of
29 1997 in preventing and responding to historic natural events; and

1 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Sixty-fifth Legislative Assembly congratulates all
2 communities throughout the Red River Valley on their perseverance and commitment to rebuild
3 following the devastation associated with the flood of 1997; and

4 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Sixty-fifth Legislative Assembly expresses its
5 gratitude and appreciation on behalf of the people of North Dakota to the United States federal
6 government, United States Air Force, North Dakota National Guard, and countless businesses,
7 organizations, and volunteers who assisted in the protection, recovery, and rebuilding of all
8 1997 flood-impacted communities; and

9 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Secretary of State forward copies of this resolution
10 to the base commander of the Grand Forks Air Force Base; the director of the Federal
11 Emergency Management Agency; the mayors of Wahpeton, Fargo, Grand Forks, Drayton, and
12 Pembina; the North Dakota Adjutant General; the North Dakota Congressional delegation;
13 former President Bill Clinton; former Governor Ed Schafer; the 1997 North Dakota
14 Congressional delegation; and former Grand Forks Mayor Pat Owens.