

Substitute for Senate Resolution No. 78

A resolution to urge the Michigan Department of Education to provide information to help educate students about the dangers of rip currents and basic pier safety.

Whereas, The Great Lakes are known for their beauty, power, and importance to life in this region. Less well known and understood are the dangers of rip currents, which threaten public safety and can cause deaths of swimmers at beaches along Michigan's shores; and

Whereas, Rip currents, which are sometimes mistakenly referred to as rip tides or undertows, are caused by offshore sandbars that break apart. The current that results can be very strong, taking even an Olympic-caliber swimmer swiftly away from the shore. The "rip" in the sandbar can be the result of high winds or large waves, and can occur with absolutely no warning. Rip currents can last a few minutes, several hours, or even days. While there often is discoloration to the water that is swept away from the shore by the rip current, this is not always easy to see. A swimmer caught in a rip current can safely return to shore by swimming parallel to the shore, out of the rip current. However, this knowledge must be in place before such an incident occurs in order to prevent a tragedy; and

Whereas, Seawalls and piers along the Great Lakes offer both function and recreation. These structures protect Great Lakes shorelines from erosion damage and create safe entrances to Great Lakes marinas and connecting waterways. These structures are often used to access Great Lakes fishing and to view Michigan's natural beauty along the shorelines. Rough lake waters and waves crashing over piers and seawalls pose a danger to the public. These structures should be accessed only when conditions are safe; and

Whereas, There is clearly a need for greater public awareness among Michigan residents. Children are frequent visitors to our Great Lakes, often camping with parents and grandparents along the shore. Targeting students with information about swimming safely in the Great Lakes and behaving responsibly along seawalls and on piers will instill a lifelong knowledge about the strength and power of the water; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate, That we urge the Michigan Department of Education to provide information to help educate students about the dangers of rip currents and basic pier safety; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Michigan Department of Education.