

1 SJR8
2 181604-2
3 By Senators Dial and Whatley
4 RFD: Rules
5 First Read: 07-FEB-17

1 SJR8

2

3

4 ENROLLED, SJR8,

5 URGING ALL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS, PARENTS,
6 AND STUDENTS TO BE EDUCATED ABOUT THE POTENTIAL HEALTH IMPACT
7 OF HEAVY BACKPACKS AND TO TAKE PROACTIVE MEASURES TO AVOID
8 INJURY.

9

10 WHEREAS, overloaded school backpacks are causing an
11 increasing problem of back pain and spinal strain for students
12 across the nation; and

13 WHEREAS, because spinal ligaments and muscles are
14 not fully developed until after age 16, overweight backpacks
15 are a source of repeated low-level stress that may result in
16 chronic neck, shoulder, or back pain in children; and

17 WHEREAS, according to the U.S. Consumer Product
18 Safety Commission, more than 7,000 emergency room visits each
19 year are due to backpack-related injuries and, in 2010 alone,
20 physicians' offices, clinics, and hospital emergency rooms
21 treated nearly 28,000 strains, sprains, dislocations, and
22 fractures from backpacks; and

23 WHEREAS, studies have shown that heavy loads carried
24 on the back have the potential to damage the soft tissues of

1 the shoulder, causing microstructural damage to the nerves and
2 damage to internal organs; and

3 WHEREAS, studies have shown an increase in
4 curvatures of the spine and compressed intervertebral height
5 when backpacks exceed 10 percent of a child's body weight; and

6 WHEREAS, the Global Burden of Disease Study of 2010
7 showed back pain as the number one cause of disability
8 worldwide and musculoskeletal disorders as the second cause;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, children's textbooks are much heavier now
11 than many years ago, and in addition to textbooks, students
12 often carry computers, cell phones, water bottles, running
13 shoes, band instruments, and other equipment considered
14 essential to have readily available; and

15 WHEREAS, more than 90 percent of students carry
16 backpacks, which in studies have been found to weigh as much
17 as 25 percent of the child's body weight; and

18 WHEREAS, backpacks are often not worn correctly,
19 often slung over one shoulder or allowed to hang significantly
20 below the waistline, increasing the weight on the shoulders
21 and making the child lean forward when walking or stoop
22 forward when standing to compensate for the weight; now
23 therefore,

24 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, BOTH
25 HOUSES THEREOF CONCURRING, That we strongly recommend that all

1 school administrators, teachers, parents, and students be
2 educated about the potential health impact of heavy backpacks
3 and take proactive measures to avoid injury.

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That schools should work
5 with their parent teacher organizations to assess the extent
6 to which students use overweight backpacks and to promote
7 innovative homework strategies, lessening the need to take all
8 school materials and books back and forth each day.

9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That schools should consider
10 the following points when developing their backpack education
11 talking points:

12 (1) Backpacks should weigh no more than a maximum of
13 10 percent of a child's body weight.

14 (2) Encourage ergonomic backpacks with
15 individualized compartments to efficiently hold books and
16 equipment.

17 (3) Encourage children to wear both shoulder straps
18 and not sling the backpack over one shoulder.

19 (4) Encourage wide, padded adjustable straps that
20 fit a child's body.

21 (5) Encourage the heaviest books be left at school
22 and handouts or workbooks be used for homework assignments.

23 (6) Schools should consider moving toward
24 e-textbooks as federal and state funding becomes available.

1 (7) Schools should consider integrated education
2 about backpacks by using a hanging scale in the classroom,
3 allowing students to weigh their backpack and enter the
4 results into a graph that would track the weights, and then
5 look at the data to determine what may be done to lighten
6 loads.

7 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of
8 this resolution be prepared and presented to the State
9 Superintendent of Education and the members of the State Board
10 of Education.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21

President and Presiding Officer of the Senate

Speaker of the House of Representatives

SJR8
Senate 09-FEB-17
I hereby certify that the within Senate Joint Resolution
originated in and was adopted by the Senate.

Patrick Harris
Secretary

House of Representatives
Adopted: 21-FEB-17

By: Senator Dial