

Rep. Opsommer offered the following concurrent resolution:

House Concurrent Resolution No. 71.

A concurrent resolution to memorialize Congress to reduce the price of traditional passports, by directly lowering the cost to consumers or by offering fully refundable federal income tax deductions to citizens who live in border states.

Whereas, To ensure greater national security, the United States government now has stricter identification standards in place to gain re-entry into the United States. A passport is currently required in order to enter the United States by air. Starting in June of 2009, a passport may also be required for all ground crossings, including re-entry from Mexico and Canada. The Department of Homeland Security has also stated that, in the future, a passport may become one of a new breed of identity documents necessary for even domestic tasks, including boarding airplanes for flights that stay entirely within the United States. It is therefore becoming evident that passports will become a document that even citizens not traveling overseas will need, including for domestic and non-travel related reasons; and

Whereas, Three-quarters of all travelers enter the United States through our 163 land ports of entry. Michigan residents have traditionally been able to move back and forth across the Canadian border with a \$25 driver license or a birth certificate for identification. The free flow of consumer and tourist traffic between Canada and Michigan is a boost to the Michigan and national economies. Conversely, inhibiting citizens from crossing the border could negatively affect the local and national economies; and

Whereas, More residents, especially those of border states like Michigan, should be encouraged to obtain a traditional, fully functioning passport in order to comply with federal laws and to aid in border crossings. Despite a recent Government Accountability Office investigation that showed citizens being overcharged, traditional passports have seen recent price increases that sometimes put the price at over \$100. A \$100 cost will be prohibitive for many residents and discourage free travel, or will force citizens into newer "passport-lite" alternatives that are of limited utility and encroach upon the privacy and sovereignty of state documents. A federal subsidy that reduces the price of traditional federal passports to \$50, either through a direct price reduction or fully refundable tax deduction, could allay the cost and encourage passport purchases and free travel, thus aiding the economy. These reductions should come out of the monies the federal government would ordinarily receive, and not from reimbursement costs the federal government uses for security checks or initial passport processing by clerks or other local government officials; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That we memorialize Congress to reduce the price of traditional passports, by directly lowering the cost to consumers or by offering fully refundable federal income tax deductions to citizens who live in border states; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and the members of the Michigan congressional delegation.