

Regular Session, 2012

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 9

BY REPRESENTATIVES CARTER, BARROW, WESLEY BISHOP, BROADWATER, CARMODY, CHAMPAGNE, HENRY, HOLLIS, JEFFERSON, NANCY LANDRY, PRICE, SHADOIN, SMITH, AND ALFRED WILLIAMS

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in collaboration with the Louisiana Serve Commission, to study the feasibility of establishing a "distinction for community service" endorsement program for students who have performed an exemplary number of community service hours during their high school careers and to provide a report to the House Committee on Education by February 1, 2013.

WHEREAS, the Constitution of Louisiana provides that the goal of the public educational system is "to provide learning environments and experiences, at all stages of human development, that are humane, just, and designed to promote excellence in order that every individual may be afforded an equal opportunity to develop to his full potential"; and

WHEREAS, providing students in high school with civic learning environments in high school will afford young people the opportunity to fully develop as civically engaged individuals; and

WHEREAS, civic involvement by young people serves to enhance and make communities in Louisiana stronger by developing a sense of civic responsibility and a sense that citizenship motivates them to actively participate in their community; and

WHEREAS, participation in community service opportunities allows young people to develop strong life skills, including communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, decisionmaking, self-awareness, self-esteem, cultural awareness, civic mindedness, and a greater appreciation for their community; and

WHEREAS, one of the values of engaging high school students in community service is that they will learn to cooperate with one another and work with a diverse group of people, including their peers and adults, with different backgrounds and experiences; and

WHEREAS, students who achieve excellence in high school deserve recognition for their dedication and work; and

WHEREAS, for the 2010-2011 school year, four thousand eight hundred fifty-three Louisiana students (2.74% of students) were appropriately honored and recognized for their academic excellence in the form of an academic endorsement on their high school diplomas; and

WHEREAS, for the 2010-2011 school year, one thousand eight hundred ninety-eight Louisiana students (1.07 % of students) earned a career/technical endorsement on their high school diplomas by completing specified course work and meeting certain requirements; and

WHEREAS, students in Louisiana deserve to be recognized for their endeavors, including those extraordinary efforts made in community service, and such achievements could be appropriately recognized through an endorsement on the student's high school diploma and notation on the student's transcript; and

WHEREAS, by providing official acknowledgment on a high school diploma and recognition at graduation ceremonies, a "distinction for community service" endorsement would provide an additional pathway for students to achieve excellence, and an appropriate acknowledgment of such service on the high school transcript would be beneficial to students applying to colleges and universities; and

WHEREAS, youth who volunteer in their communities are most likely to do well in school, graduate, vote, and engage in lifelong civic participation as adults; and

WHEREAS, research has shown that students who engage in service activities develop greater connections to their communities, as well as a greater sense of personal and social responsibility, and through these experiences they will acquire confident leadership skills which help them to better understand the issues facing their communities, including how they can make a difference through their involvement; and

WHEREAS, opportunities for high school students to perform community service should be made available and publicized at each high school in each community to assist students in choosing their services; and

WHEREAS, youth involvement in a community, especially when the youth are given an active and meaningful voice, creates a strong foundation not only for their future civic engagement, but also contributes to the strength and future of the state as well; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. clearly and eloquently expressed the value of community service, "Everyone can be great, because everyone can serve".

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in collaboration with the Louisiana Serve Commission, to study the feasibility of establishing and implementing a "distinction for community service" endorsement program for students who complete an exemplary number of community service hours during their high school careers.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that such study shall include but not be limited to the following elements:

(1) A service endorsement program for extraordinary hours of community service performed by high school students, accrued from the ninth grade through the twelfth grade, in the form of a diploma endorsement, a notation on the student's high school transcript, and acknowledgment at high school graduation programs.

(2) The cost of a seal to be affixed to the diploma.

(3) Establishment of an endorsement in three levels:

(a) Gold Level, for documented community service of a minimum of three hundred hours during the high school career of a student.

(b) Silver Level, for documented community service of a minimum of one hundred fifty hours during the high school career of a student.

(c) Bronze Level, for documented community service of a minimum of fifty hours during the high school career of a student.

(4) The method and manner in which community service may be acquired through school-sponsored and independent, but verifiable, community service activities.

(5) The method and manner in which the hours of community service completed by students may be tracked.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that should a "distinction for community service" endorsement program be developed and implemented, participation shall be voluntary and participation shall be at the discretion of the governing authority for each high school under the jurisdiction of such authority.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana requests the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to submit a written report of its findings and recommendations to the House Committee on Education by not later than February 1, 2013.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the president of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the state superintendent of education.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES