

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 64

BY SENATORS PEACOCK AND TARVER

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To express the sincere condolences of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the passing of community activist Joe Robert Wills of Shreveport, Louisiana, a stalwart veteran of the Modern Civil Rights Movement.

WHEREAS, it is with heavy hearts that the Legislature of Louisiana has learned of the death of Joe R. Wills, an exceptional man of the people, who "made a difference" as a political action organizer; and

WHEREAS, it is a privilege to honor the memory of Joe. R. Wills whose life was dedicated to the betterment of all mankind by his exceptional contributions as a civic leader who served as vice president of the Shreveport Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), as a charter member and president of Black United for Lasting Leadership, Inc., and as president of the Eastside Brotherhood Association; and

WHEREAS, Joe R. Wills was an extraordinary individual of profound moral character, a self-taught scholar, and a pioneer for the cause that he knew to be just and righteous – the concept that all human beings were to be afforded equal protection before the law; and

WHEREAS, he was, first and foremost, a servant of God and a member and deacon of the St. Peter Baptist Church; his Christian faith gave him strength of purpose to remain steadfast in his beliefs and to help others; and

WHEREAS, as an advocate for change in the early days of the Civil Rights Movement, Joe Wills would not be deterred by threats of bodily harm as he went door-to-door encouraging others to exercise their constitutional right to register and vote; and

WHEREAS, Joe R. Wills brought about change in local government in its voter redistricting measures, neighborhood improvements, and by supporting public recognition of well-respected educators and community leaders; and

WHEREAS, he was born of humble beginnings and reared in the community of Stoner Hill where he was affectionately known as "the mayor"; and

WHEREAS, he graduated from Booker T. Washington High School in 1963 at the beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement and remained involved in political activism; and

WHEREAS, as a employee of AT&T and Avaya Technologies, Joe Wills retired after thirty-two years of service, and, during his employment participated in the negotiations of the Communications Workers of America union and served on its executive board; and

WHEREAS, after retirement Joe kept busy within his neighborhood, helping out at church, offering sage advice, and showing concern for his fellow man; and

WHEREAS, Joe R. Wills was married for fifty-two years to his wife Shirley, and together they made a Christian home built on God's love, and their union was blessed with precious children, grandchildren, extended family and faithful friends; and

WHEREAS, Joe R. Wills shall long be remembered for his legacy of activism in defiance of long-standing customs that suppressed minorities in either the availability of or access to opportunities and services, and for his tireless advocacy to defeat racial discrimination; and

WHEREAS, Joe R. Wills was a pillar of the community, an eloquent, charming man filled with great kindness; and

WHEREAS, Joe Robert Wills remains an inspirational figure; his support of "making a difference" resonates within the hearts and minds of all who seek a positive change for the disenfranchised; and

WHEREAS, on March 11, 2016, Joe R. Wills found his place in the firmament with his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and transitioned to his heavenly home to be with all the great civil rights activists who have gone before him, both well-known and unknown.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby express heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Joe Robert Wills, an extraordinary community leader.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby recognize the lifetime of devotion to racial equality that Joe R. Wills wrought; for he made the world a more humane and compassionate place in which to live and his devotion to the rights of all men reminds us of how far we all have come.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to his widow, Mrs. Shirley Wills.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES