

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 24

BY SENATORS BROOME, WARD AND WHITE

A RESOLUTION

To express the sincere condolences of the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the death of Deacon Chairman Emeritus Jesse Spears Jr.

WHEREAS, it is with great sorrow and sadness that the members of the Louisiana Senate have learned of the death of Deacon Chairman Emeritus Jesse Spears Jr., known throughout the community as "Sugar" or "Mr. Jesse," on Monday, April 6, 2015, at age eighty-seven; and

WHEREAS, a native and resident of Zachary, Louisiana, he was an only child, born June 8, 1927, to Jesse Spears Sr., and Leona Wesley Shoemaker; and

WHEREAS, he was married to Virginia M. Spears for sixty-four years and they were blessed with five children; and

WHEREAS, a deacon at New Pilgrim B.C. for over sixty-one years, community activist, and civil rights pioneer, Jesse was indelibly involved in and always made himself available for a cause, never being far away from the "action" in his community or in his church, for he was blessed with wisdom, knowledge, and the Holy Spirit; and

WHEREAS, Jesse began his early educational endeavors at Little Star Baptist Church, and then later traveled by train from Zachary to Scotlandville to attend Southern University Laboratory School, graduating in 1945 and also attended tailoring school, becoming a tailor; and

WHEREAS, a veteran of World War II, he began work in the Zachary area at Kennedy's lumber company, and in Baker at Merrick's gas station, before being employed by the Ethel Refinery plant in Baton Rouge; and

WHEREAS, Sugar retired from Copolymer Rubber and Chemical plant in 1989, after thirty years of service; and

WHEREAS, baptized by the late Reverend Mack Hill in 1938, he faithfully served New Pilgrim throughout his life: singing in the choir and then serving for sixty-one years in the Deacon Ministry; fifty-five years as chairman; and

WHEREAS, in the community, Jesse was a founding member of Zachary Men's Club, and had been a member since 1959; and

WHEREAS, he was inspired to register to vote and became actively involved in local politics, leading to his efforts in founding the Zachary Voters League; and

WHEREAS, a driving force in the old Northwestern High School PTA, he spearheaded efforts to obtain uniforms for the school's football team and was instrumental in establishing the Northwestern High School Braves Backers; and

WHEREAS, he served as president of both Northwestern's and Zachary High's parent-teacher organizations; and

WHEREAS, Jesse lent his time and expertise to service as scoutmaster for Zachary Boys Scout troops 93 and 240 and several members of these troops became ministers; and

WHEREAS, more of his community activities brought him to service as a member of the Zachary Biracial Committee, formed to lay the groundwork for the desegregation of Zachary schools in 1969 and this formative work with the schools in Zachary and his ability to work with diverse coalitions of city officials, parents, administrators, teachers, and students, led to his being appointed by former Governor Mike Foster to the first interim school board of the Zachary Community School District; and

WHEREAS, among his other civic engagements and honors include work as leader with the Zachary Benevolent Society, the Zachary Cemetery Maintenance Corporation, Incorporated, and the Zachary Kiwanis Club; and

WHEREAS, in 2005, he was recognized as "Zachary Man of the Year"; in 2007, he was voted into the Zachary Chamber of Commerce's Hall of Distinction; and in 2008, he was chosen as a recipient of the Martin Luther King Humanitarian Award by Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, he was preceded in death by his parents, Jesse Spears Sr., and Leona Wesley Shoemaker; maternal grandmother, Lucinda Albert Green; father-in-law and mother-in-law, Willie and Magaret Morrison, and a daughter, Beverly Jean Spears; and

WHEREAS, Sugar leaves to cherish his memory his loving and devoted wife, Virginia M. Spears; four children, Ronald (Alice), Wayne (Victoria), Connie Thornton (Bruce), and Carl (Ethel); four aunts, Isabell George, Jessie Green, Lucinda Green, and

Gertrude Spears; one uncle, Samuel Polk; in-laws, Ruby Morrison, Mary L. Hutson, Henry Morrison (Willie Mae), and Allen Riley Sr; eleven grandchildren and fourteen great grandchildren; two godchildren, Elizabeth Hayes and Tammy Lee; first cousin and "adopted daughter" Sharon McKnight; and a host of "adopted sons", nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends; and

WHEREAS, because of his numerous accomplishments in public and private life, the death of Deacon Chairman Emeritus Jesse Spears Jr. has left a void in his community and in our state and has created a genuine sense of profound sorrow in his friends and family; and

WHEREAS, the success of the state of Louisiana, the strength of our communities, and the overall vitality of American society depend, in great measure, upon people like Jesse Spears Jr. who dedicate their lives to making the world a better place.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby acknowledge with gratitude the outstanding service and many accomplishments of Deacon Chairman Emeritus Jesse Spears Jr., and extend sincere condolences to his family on the occasion of his death.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Virginia M. Spears.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE