

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 31

BY SENATORS ALARIO, MARTINY, ALLAIN, APPEL, BARROW, BISHOP, BOUDREAUX, CARTER, CHABERT, CLAITOR, COLOMB, CORTEZ, DONAHUE, ERDEY, FANNIN, GATTI, HEWITT, JOHNS, LAFLEUR, LAMBERT, LONG, LUNEAU, MILKOVICH, MILLS, MIZELL, MORRELL, MORRISH, PEACOCK, PERRY, PETERSON, PRICE, RISER, GARY SMITH, JOHN SMITH, TARVER, THOMPSON, WALSWORTH, WARD AND WHITE AND REPRESENTATIVES ABRAHAM, ABRAMSON, AMEDEE, ANDERS, ARMES, BACALA, BAGLEY, BAGNERIS, BARRAS, BERTHELOT, BILLIOT, BISHOP, BOUIE, BRASS, CHAD BROWN, TERRY BROWN, CARMODY, CARPENTER, GARY CARTER, ROBBY CARTER, STEVE CARTER, CHANEY, CONNICK, COUSSAN, COX, CREWS, CROMER, DANAHAY, DAVIS, DEVILLIER, DWIGHT, EDMONDS, EMERSON, FALCONER, FOIL, FRANKLIN, GAINES, GAROFALO, GISCLAIR, GLOVER, GUINN, HALL, JIMMY HARRIS, LANCE HARRIS, HAVARD, HAZEL, HENRY, HENSGENS, HILFERTY, HILL, HODGES, HOFFMANN, HOLLIS, HORTON, HOWARD, HUNTER, HUVAL, IVEY, JACKSON, JAMES, JEFFERSON, JENKINS, JOHNSON, JONES, JORDAN, NANCY LANDRY, TERRY LANDRY, LEBAS, LEGER, LEOPOLD, LYONS, MACK, MAGEE, MARCELLE, MARINO, MCFARLAND, MIGUEZ, DUSTIN MILLER, GREGORY MILLER, MORENO, JAY MORRIS, JIM MORRIS, NORTON, PEARSON, PIERRE, POPE, PUGH, PYLANT, REYNOLDS, RICHARD, SCHEXNAYDER, SEABAUGH, SHADOIN, SIMON, SMITH, STAGNI, STEFANSKI, STOKES, TALBOT, THIBAUT, THOMAS, WHITE, WRIGHT AND ZERINGUE

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To commend, posthumously, former Jefferson Parish Sheriff Harry Lee for his extraordinary life and contributions to Jefferson Parish and the state of Louisiana.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that Harry Lee, one of the most famous politicians in Louisiana history and the second longest-serving Jefferson Parish sheriff, be commended and honored for his extraordinary life and significant contributions to Jefferson Parish and the state of Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, he was born in the back room of the family laundry business on Carondelet Street in New Orleans in 1932 into an immigrant family that spoke Chinese at home and were in a lonely minority in a Southern city that has never had a large Asian

population; and

WHEREAS, he got a firsthand taste of politics early, at age twelve, when he was elected president of the newly formed student body government at Shaw Elementary School and was elected to class office each year thereafter; during his senior year at Francis T. Nicholls High School, he was president of both his senior class and the student body, a school first; and

WHEREAS, Harry Lee received a bachelor's degree in geology from Louisiana State University, did a short stint in the Air Force in Texas, and later served in the Louisiana Air National Guard under the Judge Advocate's Office; and

WHEREAS, he returned to Louisiana in 1959, the same year that the family began construction on the House of Lee; and

WHEREAS, he learned the art of politics from United States Representative Hale Boggs and Boggs' widow, Lindy, who succeeded her husband in Congress, working for six years as Hale Boggs' driver and confidant when the congressman was home in Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, Harry Lee decided that public service was the career for him and that law school was an entree so he enrolled and took classes at Loyola University School of Law while working twelve-hour days at the family's restaurant; and

WHEREAS, after law school, he set up a small practice with classmate Marion Edwards, later an appellate judge, and with Congressman Boggs' assistance, Harry Lee was appointed the first magistrate for the United States District Court in New Orleans in 1971 and, in 1976, became chief attorney for Jefferson Parish; and

WHEREAS, four years later, Harry Lee ran for and was elected to the office of sheriff of Jefferson Parish serving in that capacity for over twenty-five years until his death from leukemia on October 1, 2007, at age seventy-five, while in his seventh term as the chief law enforcement officer of the parish; and

WHEREAS, as sheriff, Harry Lee was known as a zealous crime-fighter, often credited for keeping the crime rate low in Jefferson Parish, and committed to ensuring public safety; and

WHEREAS, upon taking over the sheriff's office, he computerized and modernized

office operation, enhanced the office so that a deputy arrived at a resident's house within five minutes of an emergency call, and allowed deputies to take home marked sheriff's cars ensuring that such cars were always visible around the parish; his office usually posted an impressive homicide solve rate of more than ninety percent; and he oversaw an aggressive strategy of tracking down and prosecuting career criminals; and

WHEREAS, he was considered controversial though as he stated "I think people like me because I do a good job and because I tell it like it is", he once said, "If you ask me something, I'll give you an answer, straight up. People may not like it, but I'm not going to sugarcoat it"; and

WHEREAS, Sheriff Lee was also colorful, as at times he appeared in public in full dress uniform with gold stars on the shoulders or wore his Sheriff's Office bomber jacket while riding with his deputies on early morning drug raids; at public events, he often sported a Stetson and custom-made cowboy boots with the Sheriff's Office emblem sewn into the front; and

WHEREAS, Sheriff Lee was a fixture in Carnival parades, tossing plastic Sheriff's Office badges and cups from a float bearing his own larger-than-life image, a giant paper mache head that also briefly graced his campaign headquarters in the 1995 governor's race; and

WHEREAS, he, on more than one occasion, sang at a popular West Bank honky-tonk, Mud Bugs, and at the 1994 Jazz and Heritage Festival in New Orleans, took the stage for a duet with his friend, Willie Nelson; and

WHEREAS, he was a voracious eater and an avid hunter who had a passion for the outdoors, was committed to wildlife conservation, and had an exquisite collection of hand carved decoys; and

WHEREAS, although he was never elected in any district larger than a single parish, in 2001 he was inducted into the Louisiana Political Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, Sheriff Lee was survived by his wife, Lai Lee; a daughter, Cynthia Sheng; and two grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Harry Lee dedicated his life to the service of his family, parish, state, and nation as a husband, father, soldier, attorney, magistrate, and sheriff.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend, posthumously, Harry Lee; does hereby recognize and record for posterity his contributions to Jefferson Parish and the state of Louisiana; and does hereby express the enduring appreciation of his fellow citizens.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the family of Harry Lee.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES