SLS 18RS-2208

ORIGINAL

2018 Regular Session

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 88

BY SENATOR CLAITOR

COMMENDATIONS. Commends, posthumously, John P. Nelson Jr. for his contributions to civil rights in Louisiana.

| 1 | A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION |
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| 2 | To commend, posthumously, John P. Nelson Jr. for his contributions to civil rights in |
| 3 | Louisiana. |
| 4 | WHEREAS, John Pettit Nelson Jr., who died in 2006, was a New Orleans attorney |
| 5 | who worked on various landmark civil rights cases; and |
| 6 | WHEREAS, John Pettit Nelson Jr. was one of five children born to John Pettit |
| 7 | Nelson of St. Louis, Missouri, and Stella Foret of Lafouche Parish, Louisiana, in 1921; and |
| 8 | WHEREAS, a native of Gulfport, Mississippi, John Nelson grew up in New Orleans |
| 9 | and attended Louisiana State University for three years, then receiving his B.S. and L.L.B. |
| 10 | degrees from Loyola University; and |
| 11 | WHEREAS, while a junior at LSU, he volunteered for active service in the United |
| 12 | States Army in 1940, entering as a private and being discharged with a rank of captain, |
| 13 | serving in the South Pacific and the Philippines during World War II, and earning the Silver |
| 14 | Star, the Bronze Star, and the Purple Heart; and |
| 15 | WHEREAS, John Nelson was admitted to practice law in Louisiana in 1950, joined |
| 16 | the law firm of Dodd, Hirsch and Barker, and in 1954, became the Assistant District |
| 17 | Attorney for Orleans Parish, a position which he left in 1958 to become a senior partner in |
| 18 | the law firm of Nelson, Ormond and Nelson; and |

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| 1 | WHEREAS, in a landmark civil rights case, Nelson represented the defendant's in |
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| 2 | the case of Lombard v. Louisiana (subsequently Louisiana v. Goldfinch, et al.) a sit-in case |
| 3 | that occurred in Orleans Parish where demonstrators had been sentenced in state court to |
| 4 | ten-year jail terms for "criminal anarchy", a matter which he handled through all of |
| 5 | Louisiana's courts and argued before the United States Supreme Court with the ultimate |
| 6 | decision in favor of the defendants; and |

WHEREAS, this was the first time a white attorney in the South, unaffiliated with
any civil rights organization, had represented an African American in a civil rights case
before the United States Supreme Court; and

WHEREAS, John Nelson also handled the suit to integrate Tulane University,
initially losing the suit after getting an earlier favorable judgment, when a second judge
rendered a negative decision but prompting Tulane to voluntarily desegregate; and

WHEREAS, he served as counsel for St. Augustine High School of New Orleans, a de facto racially segregated black school, in its efforts to integrate interscholastic athletic activities overseen by the Louisiana High School Athletic Association and he also represented the Houma Indians of Terrebonne Parish, where a tri-racial pattern of segregation existed and was successful in obtaining a federal court injunction and plan for integration of the schools; and

19 WHEREAS, in 1960, Nelson was one of the organizers of the Save Our Schools 20 (SOS) movement in Louisiana, which organized resistance to the efforts to close public 21 schools in order to prevent integration; SOS carried on a widespread program of education 22 and a "car-lift" for children wishing to attend boycotted schools; with two other SOS 23 attorneys Nelson submitted an amicus brief in the St. Helena School closing case, heard 24 before the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana; he was also a 25 trustee of the Back to School Fund that assisted parents who lost employment because they sent their children to integrated schools; and Nelson won a favorable suit brought against the 26 27 New Orleans Athletic Club by Thomas P. Perkins Jr., a young African American Harvard student from New Orleans, who when home from university, was denied entrance and use 28 of the facilities even though Perkins was a member of the Harvard Club of Boston, which 29 30 had a reciprocal agreement with the athletic club; and

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| 1 | WHEREAS, Nelson was a founding member of the National Catholic Conference |
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| 2 | for Interracial Justice, and later served as vice chairman on its legal committee; he also |
| 3 | served as a member of the board of directors of the Louisiana Council on Human Relations |
| 4 | and a member of the Louisiana Advisory Committee to the United States Civil Rights |
| 5 | Commission; and |
| 6 | WHEREAS, John P. Nelson Jr. donated to the Amistad Research Center at Tulane |
| 7 | University, a collection of his papers which consist of 7.2 linear feet of materials arranged |
| 8 | into three series of materials related to integration in New Orleans and within the state of |
| 9 | Louisiana, General Materials (1957-1967), Public Service Organizations (1969-1973), and |
| 10 | Legal Cases (1960-1977); and |
| 11 | WHEREAS, the papers document Nelson's active participation in the civil rights |
| 12 | movement, school integration in New Orleans, and his work as an Assistant District |
| 13 | Attorney for Orleans Parish and includes 1,227 pieces of correspondence dated between |
| 14 | 1957 and 1977; and |
| 15 | WHEREAS, the papers also include magazine articles, speeches, a proposal, |
| 16 | collected materials, notes, memoranda, agendas, reports, minutes, job descriptions, |
| 17 | applications, resumes, forms, and various legal documents; and |
| 18 | WHEREAS, John P. Nelson Jr. was a progressive voice for Louisiana, a well known, |
| 19 | highly respected, admired attorney, and citizen of Louisiana who left an indelible mark upon |
| 20 | the lives of all those who knew him; and |
| 21 | WHEREAS, the success of the state of Louisiana, the strength of our communities, |
| 22 | and the overall vitality of American Society depend, in great measure, upon people like |
| 23 | John P. Nelson Jr. |
| 24 | THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby |
| 25 | commend, posthumously, John P. Nelson Jr. for his contributions to civil rights in Louisiana. |
| | The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part |
| | THE OLIVITAL HISTORICAL AND THE TOHOWING OLIVES. WHICH CONSTITUTES NO DALL |

The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Jerry J. Guillot.

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Claitor

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