

2018 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 146

BY REPRESENTATIVE COX

A RESOLUTION

To express the condolences of the House of Representatives upon the death of Willard Jones, Sr.

WHEREAS, the members of the House of Representatives were saddened to learn of the death of Willard Jones, Sr., at the age of ninety-four years; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Jones was a gifted artisan in manufacturing and crafting iron works; born to Harry and Geraldine Jones on April 28, 1923, in the town of Bermuda in south Natchitoches Parish, he lived through the Great Depression and moved to Louella as his family searched for better farming opportunities; floods in Louella forced his family to a farm near the village of Campti, where they raised cotton, vegetables, and cattle; young Willard gleaned his father's natural ingenuity with equipment; with repair and maintenance shops few and far away and transportation at a premium, Willard Jones learned to analyze and solve problems in a way that served him throughout his life; and

WHEREAS, hired as a rank-and-file laborer by Southern Cotton Oil Company, he initially was restricted from performing repairs because blacks were not allowed to touch the cotton gin equipment, but when the majority race repairman proved unreliable, Willard's knack for problem-solving surfaced and he developed superior skills at welding; he was elevated to the post of superintendent in 1978, the first African American superintendent of a cotton operation in the United States; he worked for Southern Cotton Oil Company for thirty-five years, from 1945 to 1980; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Jones' unmatched repair talents led to calls for his help in troubleshooting at cotton gins from Elm Grove in northern Louisiana to Cheneyville in southern Louisiana; despite his recognized expertise, Willard Jones was met with prejudice,

discrimination, and workplace jealousy at several sites, but through long and unrelenting hours, Mr. Jones demonstrated innovation at his repair jobs; he had a knack for fashioning tools and parts to get gin equipment running at peak performance; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Jones' love of iron work is on display across the state; he crafted ornate iron crosses, beautiful iron fences, decorative grills, large barbecue and smoking pits, safety grips and columns for bathrooms, lawn enhancements, and home construction improvements; an iron spiral staircase fashioned by Willard Jones is in use at one of the Kaffie family residences in the Natchitoches Historic District; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Jones is the owner of a U.S. patent for an adjustable shoe holder; his life was filled with expressions of his love and care for his native Natchitoches Parish; he was a member of the Natchitoches Housing Authority and he helped to build the MLK Recreation Center; and

WHEREAS, Willard Jones was the proud, supportive father of his seven children, a loving grandfather, uncle, and brother, a friend to many, and a leader in the Natchitoches community; family and friends will forever hold fond memories of Willard Jones, Sr., in their hearts and minds.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby express heartfelt condolences upon the death of Willard Jones, Sr.; does hereby record for posterity the myriad and sundry accomplishments of his nine-plus decades of life; and does hereby offer thoughts and hopes for peace and comfort to those who mourn the loss of this fine native son of Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a suitable copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the family of Willard Jones, Sr.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES