

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 158

BY SENATOR MILLS

A RESOLUTION

To express the sincere condolences of the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the death of Wade Joseph Watkins.

WHEREAS, it is with deep regret and profound sorrow that the citizens of Louisiana and the members of the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana have learned of the passing of Wade Joseph Watkins, on January 28, 2018, at age ninety; and

WHEREAS, he was born in New Iberia, Louisiana, on July 2, 1927, and raised in St. Martinville where he shared his life with his devoted wife, Kathryn, of sixty-three years and where they raised their four children; and

WHEREAS, he retired from the United States Army after forty-two years of service and was a veteran of World War II; and

WHEREAS, starting at a young age, Wade Watkins had a vast experience of life roles including working in the cane, pepper, and cotton fields with his uncles and relatives, running a seafood market with his wife, working in construction, being a car salesman, and working in the oilfield with Humble Oil; and

WHEREAS, he also worked for the United States Postal Service walking seven miles a day as a mail carrier for over twenty years, served as park ranger and 4th of July celebration coordinator, was a member and decorated medalist for the National Guard Rifle Team at state and national levels, was coach and sponsor for the American Legion Junior Rifle Team who became national winners, Army National Guard Recruiter, Sheriff's Deputy for thirty-three years, operated the Auxiliary Police, served with Civil Defense, worked in private security, and also operated a boat motor repair shop with his son for many years; and

WHEREAS, Wade Watkins pushed for the rights and protection of the elderly and was a founder of the first TRIAD program in St. Martin Parish and in the nation; and

WHEREAS, he was also the driving force behind the Veteran's Memorial in St. Martinville, which was a dream which he worked on tirelessly for over twelve years and

accomplished; and

WHEREAS, Wade Watkins once rode a double decker airplane with President Harry Truman; and

WHEREAS, he was a decorated boxer in the United States Army in several classes; he was called "Frenchie" when stationed in Germany because of his fluent French; he actually lied about his age to join the United States Army and was sent home until he turned seventeen; he then served in the European theatre of war, while his dad and uncles served in the Pacific theatre; and

WHEREAS, Wade Watkins was injured by severe frost bite on his right hand and ear when he ended up in a cave with his platoon for weeks, landing him in the hospital, but not before discovering and recovering some of Hitler's treasures that were stolen from the Germans and hidden deep inside the cave; and

WHEREAS, he was honored by the Woodmen of the World and the Veterans of Foreign Wars as well as Citizen of the Year in 2013 by the American Legion, and also awarded the honor of Citizen of the Year by the city of St. Martinville in 1973 for saving a man's life - not being his first time to do so, or his last; and

WHEREAS, Wade Watkins was a devout Catholic who prayed the rosary daily and was a very faithful man who knew his God well; he was actively involved in his parish Church of St. Martin de Tours, serving as a Catholic Youth Group Leader, alongside Alvin and Gerry Cormier and Wiltz and Pearl Bienvenue, mentoring many with time and patience and leading by example and was proud to be thought of as an "honorary father and grandfather"; and he was a member of the Knights of Columbus, American Legion, VFW, and Honor Guards; and

WHEREAS, he was known as "the man of 17 uniforms" because of his active involvement in his community and countless hours volunteering; and

WHEREAS, he was an avid hunter, and founder of the Big W Hunting Club; he loved to camp with his family, and enjoyed fishing with his son-in-law, Richard, and caregivers, Leah and John; and

WHEREAS, he brought strength and passion to his family, teaching them all about God and to give of themselves; he never sought recognition and was very humble in all he

did; he was quick to pick up the pieces for all of his nieces, nephews, and cousins in their times of need; and he was the grandfather to all of their children at one time or another and was quick to become the "favorite uncle" because of his guidance and time he gave to all; he spent many years following his grandkids to the various activities they participated in and guided them all to the adults they are today by his example; and

WHEREAS, he had three girls he considered his "Wednesday's Child", Tricia Hammon, Billy Broussard Theriot, and Michelle Tauzin; stepped up as the father figure to the girl he considered his surrogate daughter - Susan Broussard Douet, aka his "Suzie-Q"; and

WHEREAS, Wade Watkins was preceded in death by his wife, Kathryn Chastant Watkins; his parents Columbus and Rena Oubre Watkins; brothers-in-law, Warren, Raymond, Richard, and Norman Chastant; sisters-in-law, Loretta Chastant Prados, Juliette Chastant Lee, and Margaret Chastant Broussard; and

WHEREAS, he is survived by son, Kirk Watkins and wife, Jeannie; three daughters, Phyllis Watkins Castille and husband, John, Patty Watkins Boudreaux and husband, Scott, and Lori Watkins Hurst and husband, Richard; six grandchildren Sean Castille and wife Kristal, Clint Castille and partner Ashley Bouton, Jeremy Watkins and wife, Nicole, Amy Watkins, Jamie Watkins, and Christian Hurst; six great-grandchildren, Hunter Bulliard, Hannah Guilbeau, Hugh Castille, Nicholas Watkins, Luke Watkins, and Easton Castille; sisters-in-law, Rose, Joyce, Shirley, and Jackie Chastant; his exchange student granddaughter, Klara Kall, of Sweden; and numerous nieces and nephews; and

WHEREAS, Wade touched many in the community; he was a loyal and trusted friend and his compassion was as big as his heart; he was never afraid of hard work and long hours; his faith in God came out in everything he did; his attitude and love of life was contagious; he never met a stranger; and

WHEREAS, he was the most remarkable man, the toughest gentleman, and a class act who was okay calling you out if you strayed away from God's way; and

WHEREAS, he will be dearly missed by all who had the privilege to know him, particularly his children who were proud to call him Dad and his grandchildren who were proud to call him Paw Paw; and

WHEREAS, Wade Watkins missed his wife dearly and he was proud to call her his wife, and finally they are back together; 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 men like Wade Joseph Watkins who lead by example and make the world a better place for all future generations, a true Louisiana hero, and an inspiration to all who were fortunate enough to have known him.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby honor the life of Wade Joseph Watkins, an extraordinary man who shall forever be remembered, and pay tribute to his remarkable legacy which will live long in the hearts of the many people whose lives he touched.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana express sincere and heartfelt condolences to the family of Wade Joseph Watkins upon the occasion of his death.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the family of Wade Joseph Watkins.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE