

2018 Regular Session

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 187

BY SENATOR GATTI

CONDOLENCES. Expresses condolences on the death of Arcadia Mayor Jesse Eugene Smith Jr.

1 A RESOLUTION

2 To express the sincere condolences of the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the  
3 death of Mayor Jesse Eugene Smith Jr. of Arcadia, Louisiana.

4 WHEREAS, Mayor Smith died of complications from a lung illness surrounded by  
5 family at Willis-Knighton Pierremont Health Center in Shreveport, Louisiana, on April 23,  
6 2018; and

7 WHEREAS, Jesse Eugene Smith Jr. was born on May 27, 1933 to Jesse Eugene  
8 Smith Sr. and Maxine Crawford Smith in the Driskill Mountain community of DeSoto  
9 Parish; and

10 WHEREAS, in 1946, the Smith family moved to Arcadia, leaving the rolling hill  
11 country of North Louisiana that so nurtured this family of faith, promoting a close  
12 relationship with each other and nearby friends; and

13 WHEREAS, in 1953, Eugene Smith graduated from Arcadia High School and on the  
14 following July 10, he married his sweetheart, Billie Nichols, who is now left to treasure the  
15 memory of her dear husband of nearly sixty-five years; and

16 WHEREAS, later in 1953, Eugene Smith was drafted into the United States Army  
17 and he and his wife were stationed at Fort Dix, New Jersey, where their first child, Milton  
18 Eugene Smith, was born in 1954; and

1           WHEREAS, in 1955, the family returned to Arcadia and Smith opened his first  
2 business, Smith Grocery Store; he attended Louisiana Tech University, and their second  
3 child, daughter Sheri Ann, was born in 1959; and

4           WHEREAS, Mayor Smith's work career included stints as accountant for H.R. Hayes  
5 Lumber Company in Arcadia and Monroe and he worked for several years for Firestone in  
6 both Arcadia and in Minden, Louisiana; and

7           WHEREAS, in 1963, Eugene Smith was hired by the local Office of Motor Vehicles,  
8 where he quickly advanced, eventually becoming the Assistant Administrator of the Office  
9 of Motor Vehicles from which he retired in 1990; and

10          WHEREAS, two years after his retirement from the state, Eugene Smith was  
11 appointed as the executive director of the Louisiana Motor Vehicle Commission by  
12 Governor Edwin Edwards; and

13          WHEREAS, shortly after that appointment ended, Eugene Smith entered the elective  
14 political arena, running successfully for Justice of the Peace in Bienville Parish, which was  
15 followed in 2003 by election to the office of the Mayor of Arcadia, where he continued to  
16 serve until his death; and

17          WHEREAS, in his first run for mayor, Eugene Smith's campaign slogan was "Watch  
18 Arcadia Grow!" and in his first re-election campaign, he encouraged new businesses and  
19 residents to "Come Grow with Us", both of these expressions reflecting his belief in Arcadia  
20 as a wonderful place to live, work, and run a business; and

21          WHEREAS, Mayor Smith's enthusiasm for his community was palpable and he  
22 worked tirelessly to create and sustain an atmosphere that was conducive to large and small  
23 industries as well as retail businesses locating in the area; and

24          WHEREAS, Eugene Smith took great pride in his beloved Arcadia, and he never  
25 passed up an opportunity to describe the virtues of that Bienville Parish municipality to  
26 anyone who was interested; and

27          WHEREAS, after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and redistributed much  
28 of its population, Mayor Smith hired the town's first black city attorney, Patrick Jefferson,  
29 who currently represents the town and surrounding area in the Louisiana House of  
30 Representatives and who spoke in praise of Mayor Smith, saying "He was a man of the

1 people . . . Arcadia was made the better because of his stewardship"; and

2 WHEREAS, Mayor Smith was active in his community, serving as a member of the  
3 executive board of the Louisiana Municipal Association, vice president of LMA District B,  
4 and eventually, serving on the executive board of that association, a vital organization,  
5 especially in its advocacy for Louisiana's cities and towns, especially crucial on issues facing  
6 small municipalities around the state; and

7 WHEREAS, having a wide range of interests, Mayor Smith served on the board of  
8 local civic organizations, including the Business and Industry Development Company,  
9 Louisiana Entrepreneur and Small Business Commission, and, under Governor Jindal,  
10 chairman of the Coordinating Development Corporation; and

11 WHEREAS, Eugene Smith also served as president of the Arcadia Jaycees, was  
12 commander of Ham Michael American Legion Post, and was active in the First Baptist  
13 Church of Arcadia, the Bienville Parish Chamber of Commerce, the Arcadia Lions Club, and  
14 the Arcadia Masonic Lodge; and

15 WHEREAS, the eighty-four year old mayor joined his brother, Ray Dean Smith, who  
16 served as mayor of Arcadia from 1976 to 1994; and

17 WHEREAS, Eugene Smith was known and respected around the state in connection  
18 with his years as mayor and through his activities on behalf of municipalities at the state  
19 capitol and his involvement with the Louisiana Municipal Association so much so that  
20 Governor Edwards commented on his death, saying, "Mayor Smith was an exceptional  
21 leader who proudly served all of the people of Arcadia"; and

22 WHEREAS, Mayor Eugene Smith represented all that is good in America and in  
23 American politics today; he was fervent in his praise for his town and its citizens; he strove  
24 to make his community ever more economically viable; he championed institutions in his  
25 area, especially Grambling State University; he loved his family and Billie, his ever loving  
26 wife and partner in all endeavors; he was active in his church; and he was passionate about  
27 bringing a better life to the people of Arcadia, all of whom he loved and respected.

28 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana  
29 does hereby express the sincere condolences upon the death of Mayor Jesse Eugene Smith  
30 Jr. of Arcadia, Louisiana, a tireless worker for his town as a great place to live, to work, and

1 to raise a family.

2 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Billie

3 Smith, widow of Mayor Eugene Smith Jr.

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The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part  
of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Mary Dozier O'Brien.

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SR 187 Original

DIGEST  
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Gatti

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Louisiana.