

2023 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 136

BY REPRESENTATIVE CHARLES OWEN

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To express the condolences of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the death of former Louisiana State Representative and U.S. Congressman Anthony Claude "Buddy" Leach, Jr.

WHEREAS, it is with immense sadness and profound regret that the Legislature of Louisiana has learned of the passing of former Louisiana state representative and U.S. congressman Anthony Claude "Buddy" Leach, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, Anthony Claude "Buddy" Leach, Jr., was born on March 30, 1934, to Anthony Claude Leach, Sr., and Lucille Goodwin Leach; Claude Leach, Sr., was a plumber and gas station owner who supported his family of five children after the untimely death of his wife; and

WHEREAS, despite the hardships he faced throughout his youth, Buddy excelled in his academic and extra-curricular pursuits; he graduated at the top of his class from Leesville High School and received a bachelor of science degree from Louisiana State University; while in college, he was diagnosed with polio and suffered from temporary paralysis but recovered from the disease; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from college, Buddy joined the United States Army and served as a commissioned officer from 1956 until 1959; after completing his military service, he enrolled in law school at Louisiana State University Law Center where he received a juris doctorate degree in 1963; he was admitted to the Louisiana State Bar in 1964 and began a law practice in Leesville; and

WHEREAS, Buddy combined a gentlemanly demeanor with a relatable background to win four state legislative elections and one congressional election; he was first elected to represent the parishes of Allen, Beauregard, and Vernon as a member of the Louisiana House of Representatives in 1968, during his first term; and

WHEREAS, after winning reelection in 1972, Buddy leveraged his uncanny ability to process large amounts of information to earn himself the role of chair of the tax-writing ways and means committee; his no-nonsense approach as chairman was well known in the capitol, and his management of committee meetings was renowned; in 1978 he was elected to the United States Congress representing the 4th congressional district; in 1983, he was elected to the Louisiana House of Representatives for his fourth term; and

WHEREAS, during his service as a state legislator, Buddy ushered in great advancements for his home district and the state of Louisiana, most notably ensuring that U.S. Highway 171 received critical prioritization and became the primary four-lane corridor between Shreveport and Lake Charles; from 2010 until 2012, he served as chairman of the Democratic Party in the state of Louisiana, and he remained active in party politics for the entirety of his life; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his political and legal careers, Buddy was an exceptionally successful businessman; at the urging of his beloved wife, Laura, he took a proactive role in the management of his family business, Sweetlake Land and Oil Company in Cameron and Calcasieu parishes; in 1987, his vision and steady leadership resulted in great benefits for the state of Louisiana and the growth of the oil and gas industry in Louisiana; his passion to help Louisiana and her people resulted in the discovery of the then-largest natural gas field in North America and a long-overdue economic expansion and employment boom in the southwest corner of the state; and

WHEREAS, Buddy's business and legal acumen led him to support ventures such as the development of Indigo Hotel and the Kress-Levy building in downtown Baton Rouge, facilitating the economic expansion of the capitol city; he expanded Sweet Lake's cattle herd to become the largest in the state and continued to grow the company's rice-farming operations; additionally, he oversaw the renovation of his old family camp into Grosse Savanne Lodge, one of the nation's premier fishing and waterfowl hunting destinations; and

WHEREAS, for over forty years, Buddy served on the board of Leesville-based Merchants & Farmers Bank, including nineteen as chairman; during his service, the bank's assets grew from \$20 million to \$500 million, and the bank expanded into the Lake Charles market where it was recognized as one of the top community banks in the state; and

WHEREAS, as a component of his lifetime of service, Mr. Leach was also a member of the Leesville Club for more than fifty years, volunteering countless hours and resources to the camp's principal charity, the Lions Camps for Children in Vernon Parish; he was also a lifelong member of the Masonic Lodge of Slagle; Mr. Leach was a devout Christian and an active member of Polk Memorial and Church of the Good Shepherd Episcopal churches in Leesville and Lake Charles respectively; and

WHEREAS, Anthony Claude "Buddy" Leach, Jr., leaves to cherish his memory his wife, Laura; his children, Mary Werner, Lucy Davenport, and Claude Leach; nine beloved grandchildren; two treasured sisters; and numerous other relatives who loved and admired him; he will be deeply missed, but his extraordinary legacy of service to the state of Louisiana will live on forever.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby express heartfelt condolences on the death of former Louisiana State Representative and U.S. Congressman Anthony Claude "Buddy" Leach, Jr., and does hereby extend sincerest wishes that his family, friends, former colleagues, and loved ones find comfort in their shared memories of his life.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE