

2023 Regular Session

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 198

BY SENATOR CORTEZ

COMMENDATIONS. Commends Debra Russell for her many years of dedicated service to the Louisiana Senate.

1 A RESOLUTION

2 To commend Debra Russell for her many years of dedicated public service to the state of
3 Louisiana, in particular, her forty-four years of loyal commitment and service to the
4 Louisiana Senate and to congratulate her upon the occasion of her well-deserved
5 retirement.

6 WHEREAS, Debra Russell has been a fixture at the Louisiana State Capitol and has
7 provided exemplary service to the Senate for over forty-four years, beginning her career at
8 the capitol in 1979, after a two-year stint in the executive branch; and

9 WHEREAS, she served under the leadership of nine Senate Presidents, including
10 Michael H. O'Keefe, Samuel B. Nunez Jr., Allen R. Bares, Randy Ewing, John J. Hainkel
11 Jr., Donald E. Hines, M.D., Joel T. Chaisson II, John A. Alario Jr., and Patrick "Page"
12 Cortez; and

13 WHEREAS, with her affable demeanor and unforgettable, joyful laugh, Debra
14 embodies the essence of an ideal legislative staffer and a devoted public servant, and the
15 example she set will carry on for years to come by those who had the pleasure and honor of
16 working with her; and

17 WHEREAS, Debra is the second of six children, and the only daughter, born to
18 Joseph Canale and Anginette Garafola Canale of Independence, Louisiana; and

1 WHEREAS, being raised with her five brothers, she learned early in life from her
2 mother how to raise a family and put the needs of others before her own, and these qualities,
3 which Debra personifies, contributed to the formation of many sincere and rich relationships,
4 both professional and personal; and

5 WHEREAS, in May of 1977, she graduated from Independence Girls High School
6 in Independence, Louisiana, and later that year, on August 6, 1977, she married the love of
7 her life, Richard Russell; and

8 WHEREAS, on April 2, 1979, Debra began her illustrious career and life's work at
9 the Louisiana Senate; and

10 WHEREAS, it was under the tutelage of Sylvia Duke that Debra mastered the
11 numerous responsibilities that she was entrusted to perform throughout her career; and

12 WHEREAS, Debra Russell, Sylvia Duke, and Beverly Walton, the Senate's former
13 dietician and chef, through their devoted service to the Louisiana Senate, became the best
14 of friends, and the trio enjoyed working side-by-side through the long, hard days of session
15 and loved traveling together outside of work to visit beautiful homes and destinations
16 throughout the United States with Debra as their driver; and

17 WHEREAS, it was in 1988 that Debra's "work husband" arrived at the state capitol,
18 and over the last thirty-five years, they became known as "Cliff and Debra"; far too many
19 times to count, together they seamlessly accomplished, what seemed nearly impossible to
20 most, behind-the-scene projects that improved the quality and function of the Senate; and

21 WHEREAS, Debra would describe her job as "light bulbs and toilets", but that
22 description does not even scratch the surface of her numerous contributions to the Senate,
23 including members and staff; and

24 WHEREAS, Debra's duties include but are in no way limited to meeting the needs
25 of thirty-nine Senators and numerous staff on a daily basis; ensuring sockets, lights, and
26 lamps have working electricity; packing and painting offices and moving furniture in the
27 capitol, and then re-packing and re-painting offices and re-moving furniture over and over
28 again; potting plants and exterminating rodents, snakes, and ants; coordinating general
29 maintenance and housekeeping of the Senate areas of the Louisiana State Capitol, Capitol
30 Annex, and Pentagon Barracks buildings with various state agencies as well as coordinating

1 maintenance and construction projects on the same properties with buildings and grounds
2 personnel and private contractors; maintaining inventory for all Senate property, including
3 property located in each of the thirty-nine Senate district offices; alerting members and staff
4 to freshly steamed and cleaned carpet by strategically placing bright orange construction
5 cones; keeping stock of ample supplies of water, juices, soda and creamers, sugars, and
6 honey for the pots of fresh, hot coffee; and providing necessary amenities to members and
7 staff, including an endless candy jar during session, medicine to cure a myriad of ailments,
8 toothbrushes, Neosporin, and Band-aids; and

9 WHEREAS, a typical day for Debra could begin with cleaning toilets; in the
10 afternoon, she could be setting up a lunch for Senators and their guests; and then late in the
11 evening, she could be removing carpet from a hallway where one of the toilets that she
12 cleaned that morning overflowed; and

13 WHEREAS, Debra's talents and abilities transcended the seasons as she played a
14 vital role in beautifully decorating the state capitol for Christmas and special events,
15 including inauguration; and

16 WHEREAS, she has left an indelible mark on this body's rich history in the halls and
17 on the walls of the Senate, from the placement of artifacts and paintings and the Louisiana
18 state seal as carpet medallions, to the pictures of presidents of the Senate and the numerous
19 framed collages of Senate members and their families and Senate staff, past and present; and

20 WHEREAS, the love that Debra has for her very large but tight-knit family is no
21 secret, and since the passing of her mother in 1997, Debra became the matriarch of her
22 family and never misses a birthday or a special event involving her immediate family; and

23 WHEREAS, Debra and Richard have one daughter, Brittany, and there is no question
24 that she is the apple of their eye; being able to work closely with her daughter and best friend
25 on a daily basis from 2007 to 2023 was one of the greatest joys of Debra's life and will be
26 a memory she will cherish forever; and

27 WHEREAS, it was to Debra's office that many staff ran when they needed a listening
28 ear from a friend, sound advice on a matter, a strong shoulder to cry on, or a cheerleader to
29 celebrate an engagement, a new baby, or any piece of good news; and

30 WHEREAS, in retirement, Debra plans to spend time with her family, including her

1 precious grandsons, Benjamin and Samuel, who affectionately call her "Nonna", attend
2 family gatherings, including the annual Canale Christmas, and watch Benjamin and Samuel
3 play sports anywhere and everywhere, and she looks forward to reminiscing with friends she
4 holds dear; and

5 WHEREAS, when not enjoying family time, Debra enjoys "everything LSU"
6 including attending Bengal Belles events, Tiger tailgates and games, and watching the Lady
7 Tigers play basketball, a tradition handed down from her mother who kept clippings of the
8 then up-and-coming, Kim Mulkey, a 5'4" hometown hero who started her basketball career
9 at a middle school in Tickfaw, Louisiana; and

10 WHEREAS, to her Senate family, Debra's retirement came too early and the
11 workplace will never be the same, as we will miss the tremendous difference her friendship,
12 support, and love meant to us, including all the wonderful moments with her, especially the
13 humor and chats that she so lovingly shared with so many of us, and it is with love and
14 sincerest gratitude, that Senators and staff wish Debra Russell all the best in her future
15 endeavors.

16 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana
17 does hereby commend Debra Russell on her many years of dedicated public service to the
18 state of Louisiana, in particular, her forty-four years of loyal commitment and service to the
19 Louisiana Senate and congratulate her upon the occasion of her well-deserved retirement.

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to
21 Debra Russell.

The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part
of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Your Senate Family.

SR 198 Original

DIGEST
2023 Regular Session

Cortez

Commends Debra Russell for her many years of dedicated public service to the state of Louisiana, in particular, her forty-four years of loyal commitment and service to the Louisiana Senate and to congratulate her upon the occasion of her well-deserved retirement.