

2023 Regular Session

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 205

BY SENATOR FOIL

CONDOLENCES. Expresses sincere and heartfelt condolences to the family of George Lee Griffin Sr. on the day of his passing.

1 A RESOLUTION

2 To express the sincere and heartfelt condolences of the Senate of the Legislature of
3 Louisiana on behalf of its members, past and present, and on behalf of the citizens
4 of the state of Louisiana to the family of George Lee Griffin Sr., a pioneer of the
5 banking industry, public servant, philanthropist, and dedicated family man on the
6 occasion of his passing on June 8, 2023.

7 WHEREAS, George Lee Griffin Sr. was born in Leavenworth, Kansas on
8 September 19, 1938, and grew up in Dallas, Texas, where he was a standout football player
9 and All- American diver at Highland Park High School, and he graduated with honors in
10 economics from the University of Texas at Austin, where he was a member of the diving
11 team and Phi Delta Theta fraternity; and

12 WHEREAS, after graduation, Lee intended to join the Navy as a "frogman" which
13 was the precursor to the SEALS, but failed the physical due to a high school football injury;
14 and

15 WHEREAS, despondent after the Navy's rejection, Lee sought advice from his
16 favorite professor, who recommended that he attend graduate school at Louisiana State
17 University (LSU), where Lee met his best friend for life and beautiful wife of sixty years,
18 Elizabeth Barrett "Barrie" Lobdell; and

1 WHEREAS, after earning his master's degree in economics from LSU in 1962, Lee
2 planned to return to Dallas as he had a lucrative offer from a prestigious investment firm, but
3 Barrie's father, a former LSU quarterback and student body president, refused to give his
4 blessing of Lee's proposal of marriage to Barrie unless she graduated from LSU; and

5 WHEREAS, Lee then accepted an offer to join the management training program at
6 Louisiana National Bank (LNB), and he started his remarkable life in business and
7 community and public service in Baton Rouge; and

8 WHEREAS, in the 1960s and 1970s, as a young executive, Lee was instrumental in
9 LNB's decisions to introduce programs and technologies that most banks in the South did
10 not embrace for years, such as drive-through tellers, residential loans, the first automated
11 teller machine (ATM) in Louisiana, banking by telephone, home banking which later
12 became online banking, debit cards, and credit cards; and

13 WHEREAS, Lee played a pioneering role in the worldwide credit card revolution,
14 by convincing Bank of America, later VISA, to grant LNB the first Louisiana franchisee
15 agreement for their BankAmericard, which was the first national credit card; and

16 WHEREAS, while still in his mid-thirties, he was elected to the board of directors
17 in 1975, where he would serve for the next twenty years; Lee is credited by his
18 contemporaries with coming up with the name VISA, when BankAmericard expanded into
19 other countries; and

20 WHEREAS, in making a name for himself in the international financial services
21 sector, Lee was steadily rising through the ranks at LNB, and he was named president at the
22 age of thirty-nine; and

23 WHEREAS, as president of LNB and the Louisiana Bankers' Association, in the
24 1980s, Lee convinced the legislature to legalize statewide banking, and subsequently created
25 the first statewide bank through a series of mergers that resulted in Premier Bank; and

26 WHEREAS, while serving as president, chief executive officer, and chair of the
27 board at Premier, Lee got ahead of the national banking trend in the 1990s, by brokering the
28 deal for Bank One of Ohio to purchase Premier, thus creating the first interstate bank in
29 Louisiana, with Lee serving as Bank One Louisiana's first president and chief executive
30 officer; and

1 WHEREAS, while Lee was always interested in community and public service, after
2 being elected as the president of the Committee of 100; when the legislature created the
3 Select Council on Revenue and Expenditures in Louisiana's Future, known as the SECURE
4 Council, composed of legislators, government officials, business leaders, educators, and
5 students, Lee was selected to lead this endeavor as chairman; and

6 WHEREAS, for two years, the SECURE Council conducted an extensive study of
7 Louisiana government at all levels, and was charged to "develop recommendations to
8 improve the financial future of the state and the general quality of life of its citizens" with
9 the council's recommendations saving the state four billion dollars over the next ten
10 years; and

11 WHEREAS, upon retirement from banking, Lee was appointed by Governor Murphy
12 J. "Mike" Foster to the Civil Service Commission, and was reappointed by governors
13 Kathleen Blanco, Bobby Jindal, and John Bel Edwards; and

14 WHEREAS, in the 2000s, Lee agreed to come out of retirement to serve as president
15 and chief executive officer of the LSU Foundation; Lee laid the groundwork for the "Fierce
16 for the Future" capital campaign and developed the LSU Gateway Project on Nicholson
17 Drive; and

18 WHEREAS, throughout his life, Lee gave back to the community by serving on
19 numerous philanthropic boards, and he was instrumental in the creation of St. James Place
20 retirement community as its first board chair; and

21 WHEREAS, a devout Christian and man of deep faith, Lee served his church, St.
22 James Episcopal, in various capacities, including school board president, investment
23 committee chair, chairing capital campaigns, and multiple terms on the vestry, serving as
24 Junior and Senior Warden on many occasions; and

25 WHEREAS, Lee's desire to serve his community manifested in his close association
26 with numerous other important groups and foundations across the state, including the Mary
27 Bird Perkins Cancer Center, St. James Place (founding chairman), Our Lady of the Lake
28 Regional Medical Center, Pennington Biomedical Research Foundation, The FISH,
29 American Red Cross, Family Counseling Service Center, Baton Rouge Speech & Hearing
30 Foundation, Louisiana Arts & Science Center, Rotary Club of Baton Rouge, Capital Area

1 United Way, Baton Rouge Symphony, Boy Scouts of America, Friends of the Rural Life
2 Museum, Baton Rouge Area Foundation, Louisiana Art & Science Museum, Public Affairs
3 Research Council, Boys Club of America, Greater Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce,
4 Baton Rouge Area Foundation, Council for a Better Louisiana, Louisiana Association of
5 Business and Industry, The Young Leaders Academy of Baton Rouge, Inc., Association for
6 Retarded Citizens, Community Fund for the Arts, LSU Business Partnership Board for
7 Excellence, LSU Manship School of Mass Communication, University Laboratory School
8 Foundation, Baton Rouge Youth, Inc., and National Conference of Christians & Jews; and

9 WHEREAS, Lee's contributions to his community have been recognized through
10 many awards during his lifetime, highlights of which included his induction into the LSU
11 Hall of Distinction and the E.J. Ourso College of Business Hall Distinction, his selection as
12 a 1984 Volunteer Activist, the National Conference of Christians and Jews Brotherhood
13 Award, Greater Baton Rouge Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals 2008
14 Outstanding Volunteer Fundraiser of the Year, Greater Baton Rouge Business Report and
15 Junior Achievement Hall of Fame's 1996 Businessperson of the Year, Istrouma Area Council
16 Boy Scouts of America Distinguished Citizen Award, the Baton Rouge Speech & Hearing
17 Foundation's Volunteer Activist of the Year Award, and the Highland Park High School
18 Distinguished Alumni Award; and

19 WHEREAS, Lee also had the honor of carrying the 1996 Olympic torch through
20 Baton Rouge as a member of the U.S. Olympic Committee; and

21 WHEREAS, while Lee was always busy with his business and civic activities, his
22 passion and priority was always with his lovely wife, Barrie, and his three children, Lee Jr.,
23 Bill, and Beth; and

24 WHEREAS, his family brought him great joy, and he was loved, adored, and revered
25 by his wife, children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren; and

26 WHEREAS, Lee is survived by his wife, Barrie, his children Lee (Leigh Ann)
27 Griffin, Bill (Lisa) Griffin, Beth Griffin (Alan Miller); his grandchildren, Madeline and Jack
28 Griffin, Lauren (Matthew) Morehead, Michael and Andrew Griffin, Alli (Collin) Yeargin,
29 Anna Katherine (Austin) Jackson, Griffin Miller; and great grandchildren Aubrey Kate and
30 Lydia Yeargin.

