

Regular Session, 2014

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 183

BY REPRESENTATIVE COX

A RESOLUTION

To commend Tom Benson, owner of the New Orleans Saints and Pelicans, on the occasion of his induction into the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame.

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame was established in 1958 and was intended, in the words of Otis Harris, sports editor of the *Shreveport Journal*, to be "the Louisiana Hall of Fame – a hall of fame for the state's greatest athletes, men or women, amateur or professional, living or dead"; and

WHEREAS, though the Hall of Fame began over fifty years ago, in 2013 the Hall of Fame celebrated the grand opening of its permanent and appropriate home for the recognition of Louisiana's greatest sports heroes at the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame and Northwest Louisiana History Museum in the National Historic District of Natchitoches; and

WHEREAS, among the remarkable class of honorees to be inducted into the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame on Saturday, June 21, 2014, is New Orleans native, businessman, and philanthropist, Tom Benson; and

WHEREAS, born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana, Tom Benson served in World War II for the U.S. Navy and then graduated with an accounting degree from Loyola University of New Orleans in 1948; and

WHEREAS, known for his ownership of the New Orleans Saints since 1985, the New Orleans native has been at the forefront of sports in the Crescent City for nearly thirty years; and

WHEREAS, in 1985, Tom Benson purchased the New Orleans Saints from John Mecom, saving the NFL franchise from a potential move to Jacksonville, Florida, which Benson realized would have resulted in negative economic implications for not just the city of New Orleans, but the entire state of Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, as the new owner, Benson quickly hired Jim Finks, a 1995 inductee of the Pro Football Hall of Fame, as general manager and Jim Mora as head coach, who two years later helped deliver the club's first winning season and playoff appearance since its inception in 1967; and

WHEREAS, as owner, Benson has also presided over the team's first division title in 1991, first playoff victory in 2000, and the first NFL title in 2009 after the Saints delivered a 31-17 win over the Indianapolis Colts in Super Bowl XLIV on February 7, 2010; and

WHEREAS, throughout his tenure as owner of the New Orleans Saints, Benson has served on numerous NFL committees, including three terms as Chairman of the prestigious and powerful Finance Committee; and

WHEREAS, Benson was also instrumental in bringing five Super Bowls to New Orleans, including Super Bowl XLVII which was played on February 5, 2013; and

WHEREAS, Benson, who was also the owner and operator of the New Orleans Voodoo franchise of the Arena Football League from 2002 through 2008, surprised the entire region when he purchased the New Orleans Hornets, now renamed the Pelicans, from the NBA in the spring of 2012; and

WHEREAS, Benson and his wife, Gayle, are active philanthropists as well, establishing numerous endowments and making substantial donations to various educational institutions; and

WHEREAS, in January 2012, Benson and his wife were awarded the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* for their generosity to the Catholic Church, the highest papal honor that Catholic lay persons can receive; and

WHEREAS, the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana wishes to recognize New Orleans native Tom Benson for his economic and philanthropic contributions to this state, and for his well-deserved induction into the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame, for he is truly a Louisiana sports icon.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend Tom Benson upon the occasion of his induction into the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a suitable copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Tom Benson.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES