

2016 Regular Session

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 111

BY SENATOR DONAHUE

CONDOLENCES. Expresses condolences upon the death of Hokie Gajan, Louisiana football legend.

1 A RESOLUTION

2 To express the sincere condolences of the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the
3 passing of former New Orleans Saints Football running back, Hokie Gajan, and to
4 celebrate his sports legacy in the state of Louisiana.

5 WHEREAS, it is with great sadness and heavy hearts that the Senate of the
6 Legislature of Louisiana has learned of the passing of a favorite son, Howard Lee "Hokie"
7 Gajan Jr., on April 11, 2016; Hokie was a vibrant individual who touched the lives of others
8 in a positive and meaningful manner; and

9 WHEREAS, Hokie Gajan made his mark in the world as a multi-talented athlete and
10 an accomplished running back with the Louisiana State University Fighting Tigers football
11 team and with the New Orleans Saints franchise; however, Hokie was more than a football
12 player, scout, and sports broadcaster - he also served as mentor, father figure, and advisor
13 to many young men who struggled to find success in the world of high school, collegiate,
14 and professional sports; and

15 WHEREAS, Hokie was reared in Baker, Louisiana, in a large working class family;
16 he grew up as the All-American boy who excelled as a stellar athlete in four sports at Baker
17 High School and developed under the tutelage of Coach James C. Stewart and assistant
18 coaches, Larry Thomas and Milton Broussard; football was his element; and

1 WHEREAS, he was an athletic phenomenon, known as the "Cajun Kid" by local
2 sportswriters who noted his tenacity on the gridiron; he always gave 100% on every play,
3 and his leadership motto was "lead by example"; if Hokie was giving his all, then his fellow
4 teammates were encouraged to do the same; and

5 WHEREAS, Hokie displayed outstanding physical prowess in all sports, but football
6 was his specialty and Baker High's Wedge Kyes Stadium was his springboard; he was a
7 force to be reckoned with in District Quad-A championship play, the highest ranking in the
8 Louisiana High School Athletics Association at that time; and

9 WHEREAS, in his senior year, Hokie was named Mr. BHS along with Miss BHS,
10 Judy Moak, his high school sweetheart; they married in 1979 and together celebrated
11 thirty-seven years of love and devotion; and

12 WHEREAS, college recruiters clamored to sign him; however, LSU Head Coach
13 Charles McClendon and then assistant coach Jerry Stovall recruited Hokie for an athletic
14 scholarship, and from 1977 until 1980, Hokie had a exceptional career total of 1,563 yards
15 rushing and was consistently ranked in the Top Ten for rushing statistics in the Southeastern
16 Conference; and

17 WHEREAS, Hokie Gajan parlayed his mastery of the game into a professional career
18 in the National Football League when, in 1981, Hokie was drafted in the tenth round by the
19 New Orleans Saints; he played running back and full back positions for Coach Bum Phillips
20 with a career total of 1,358 yards rushing, resulting in eleven touchdowns; and

21 WHEREAS, Hokie received praise from his contemporaries and many well-deserved
22 accolades throughout his professional career; in 1984, he led all other NFL rushers in gained
23 yardage per attempt with 102 carries, 615 yards gained, and six yards per carry; and

24 WHEREAS, two separate knee injuries brought his playing career to a premature end
25 in 1987; however, Hokie joined the scouting staff to seek out new talent for the Saints and
26 also spent thirteen years as a college scout; and

27 WHEREAS, Hokie Gajan possessed those essential characteristics of leadership and
28 trust that brought out the very best performance in athletes; he encouraged young men, both
29 in the game and beyond it, to put forth their very best efforts, be strong and brave in the face
30 of formidable opposition, and work diligently toward achievement of their lifelong goals;

1 and

2 WHEREAS, in 2000, he became a color commentator for New Orleans WWL TV
3 and Radio and was host to outdoor TV shows on fishing and hunting; his outgoing
4 personality and genuine nature were the characteristics that defined his public legacy, plus
5 his down-home witticisms, such as, "He's so fast he could go rabbit-hunting with a hammer",
6 were amusing anecdotes that became known on the airways as Hokie-isms; and

7 WHEREAS, he was also a popular pitchman for local corporate advertising; and

8 WHEREAS, Hokie remains a larger-than-life figure in the realm of Louisiana's sports
9 history, yet he will always be remembered for his kind heart, his accessibility as a player and
10 as a friend, his love of the outdoors, water sports, hunting, and fishing, and his "joy of life",
11 that enigmatic spark that still burns warmly in the hearts of all who knew him; and

12 WHEREAS, it is the memory of his passion for the game that shall be revisited from
13 time to time; the spirit of Hokie Gajan was remembered, along with the late Will Smith, at
14 the 2016 National Football League Draft ceremonies with heartwarming reverence by friend
15 and fellow New Orleans Saint, Deuce McAllister; and

16 WHEREAS, Gajan and Smith were both elected for enshrinement into the New
17 Orleans Saints Hall of Fame in early 2016; and

18 WHEREAS, Hokie Gajan had the good fortune to participate in high school, college,
19 and professional football careers all in south Louisiana, within one hundred miles of family
20 and home; it seemed that Hokie was always "at home" wherever he was, at ease with himself
21 and the world around him; and

22 WHEREAS, Hokie and Judy were blessed with four daughters: Jennifer Gajan-Mier,
23 Kristin G. Sell, Megan G. Trahan, and Alexis B. Gajan; eight grandchildren, and a host of
24 friends, colleagues, and extended family; and

25 WHEREAS, although Hokie Gajan has been taken from our midst far too soon, he
26 shall be remembered for his devotion to family, his friendly demeanor, warm smile, and
27 kindness to others as well as his outstanding courage and steadfast dedication to his faith,
28 community, and the sport of football.

29 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana
30 does hereby extend its heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of the late Howard Lee

1 "Hokie" Gajan Jr., whose legacy and influence shall be felt for many seasons to come at
2 fishing tournaments, hunting camps, and on the gridiron and sidelines of football stadiums
3 throughout this nation, from first whistle to final play his spirit will be there.

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the
5 family of Hokie Gajan.

The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part
of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Susan Price Montague.

SR 111 Original DIGEST Donahue
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