

2017 Regular Session

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 76

BY SENATOR CARTER

CONDOLENCES. Expresses condolences upon the death of former New Orleans police superintendent, Richard Pennington.

1 A RESOLUTION

2 To express the sincere condolences of the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the
3 death of Richard Pennington, former New Orleans police superintendent.

4 WHEREAS, it is with deep regret and profound sorrow that the citizens of Louisiana
5 and the members of the Louisiana Senate have learned of the passing of Richard Pennington,
6 at age seventy, on May 4, 2017 in Georgia; and

7 WHEREAS, he was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, the son of a railroad waiter and
8 a barbershop and pool hall owner, and when he was in the eighth grade, his family moved
9 to Gary, Indiana; and

10 WHEREAS, Pennington joined the United States Air Force after high school and did
11 a tour of duty in Vietnam; and

12 WHEREAS, upon his return to the states, he settled on a career in law enforcement
13 and rose quickly up the ranks of the Washington, D.C., Police Department to assistant chief;
14 and

15 WHEREAS, at forty-seven, Richard Pennington moved south to head the New
16 Orleans police force, taking over as police superintendent at the height of the mid-1990s
17 murder epidemic and fulfilled a promise to slash the city's homicide rate by half; and

18 WHEREAS, hailed for cleaning up a corruption-plagued force that saw two New

1 Orleans police officers sent to death row, Pennington capped off a triumphant eight-year
2 tenure as police superintendent with an unsuccessful bid to take the place of his boss, Marc
3 Morial, as mayor in 2002; and

4 WHEREAS, soon thereafter, he left New Orleans to become police chief in Atlanta,
5 a job he held until his retirement, following a stroke, in 2010; and

6 WHEREAS, according to former Mayor Morial, "without question he was my
7 partner in this effort to transform the New Orleans Police Department in a historic way. I
8 think history will record him as the very best police superintendent in the history of the city,
9 given where we started. It was a dramatic transformation"; and

10 WHEREAS, in 1994, Chief Pennington's first year, New Orleans saw 421 murders,
11 a high-water mark for the city; however, by 1999, the city recorded only 159 murders, a drop
12 of sixty-two percent and the city also experienced a precipitous drop in major crimes; and

13 WHEREAS, according to Mayor Morial, "he was unflinching in his willingness to
14 discipline police officers for violations of codes of conduct"; and

15 WHEREAS, Pennington was a transformational leader and agent of change who
16 instituted a series of reforms within the department as he decentralized the police department
17 and made it closer to the community and handed more authority to district commanders; and

18 WHEREAS, he strengthened the NOPD Public Integrity Bureau, outlawing off-duty
19 detail work at bars and strip clubs and prohibiting the hiring of people with criminal records
20 and implemented the crime trend monitoring system known as COMSTAT; and

21 WHEREAS, Richard Pennington was held in high esteem by police officers who
22 trained under him and fond recollections of good times will forever remain in the hearts and
23 minds of those who knew him best.

24 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana
25 does hereby extend sincere condolences to the family, friends, and former employees of
26 retired New Orleans police superintendent Richard Pennington and does hereby offer best
27 hopes and prayers for comfort to those who mourn his passing.

