

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 72

BY SENATOR MILLS

A RESOLUTION

To designate Thursday, May 18, 2017, as March of Dimes Day at the Louisiana State Capitol.

WHEREAS, the March of Dimes began as the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis in 1938, established by then President Franklin Roosevelt, a victim himself of the polio virus; and

WHEREAS, Franklin Delano Roosevelt contracted the polio virus in 1921 at the age of thirty-nine and never walked unassisted again in his life; and

WHEREAS, the Foundation was directed by a close associate of the president, but its work was accomplished largely by volunteers who organized local March of Dimes fundraisers nationwide; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Foundation was to offer support when polio epidemics occurred and to fund scientific research regarding the polio virus, intending to eventually develop a vaccine against the feared disease; and

WHEREAS, during World War II the United States Army received a polio virus research grant funded by the March of Dimes to investigate the disease as one of those affecting soldiers fighting in North Africa; and

WHEREAS, in 1946, as a result of extensive efforts by the March of Dimes, President Franklin Roosevelt was memorialized on newly minted U.S. dimes, forever linking FDR and the March of Dimes; and

WHEREAS, in 1955 the extensive efforts of the March of Dimes to fund research regarding polio paid off, and a March of Dimes grantee, Jonas Salk, MD, created the "Salk vaccine" which was quickly licensed and approved for use to prevent the contraction of polio. Within months the new cases of polio dropped from tens of thousands to a mere handful annually in the United States and, eventually, throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, with its original purpose successfully accomplished and with a prodigious fundraising potential and an army of volunteers, the March of Dimes turned its

attention to fighting birth defects, funding programs of education intended to promote healthy pregnancies, and preventing premature births in the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, premature birth is the number one killer of newborns in the first month of life, with over half a million babies born prematurely every year in this country, including nearly eight thousand in Louisiana in 2014, representing over twelve percent of all births in the state; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana received a failing grade in preterm births because one in six babies are born preterm, with Caddo Parish having the worst preterm birthrate in the nation with more than eighteen percent of the state's births born preterm in this one parish alone; and

WHEREAS, on May 18, 2017, March of Dimes volunteers will be visiting the legislature to raise awareness of the issue of preterm birth and to symbolize hope to Louisiana families dealing with preterm births or who are working to stay healthy and bring their babies to full term; and

WHEREAS, from a beginning nearly eighty years ago, largely through the patronage of President Franklin Roosevelt, himself a victim of polio, to an organization that funded the grant to Jonas Salk, MD, the discoverer of a vaccine to prevent the disease which has been effectively eradicated worldwide, to crusades to save babies and bring fewer preterm babies into the world, the March of Dimes has maintained its legions of volunteers and it is to be congratulated for the success at fundraising for its twenty-first century issues of premature birth, healthy pregnancies, and neonatal abstinctions critical for mothers in order to carry healthy babies to full term, the March of Dimes has served this state and nation well and is deserving of support, respect, and the thanks of a grateful state and nation.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby designate Thursday, May 18, 2017, as March of Dimes Day at the Louisiana State Capitol.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the Louisiana Chapter of the March of Dimes.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE