

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 76

BY SENATOR CARTER

A RESOLUTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, hailed for cleaning up a corruption-plagued force that saw two New Orleans police officers sent to death row, Pennington capped off a triumphant eight-year tenure as police superintendent with an unsuccessful bid to take the place of his boss, Marc Morial, as mayor in 2002; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE