

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 75

BY SENATORS LONG, ALARIO, ALLAIN, APPEL, BARROW, BISHOP, BOUDREAUX, CARTER, CHABERT, CLAITOR, COLOMB, CORTEZ, DONAHUE, ERDEY, FANNIN, GATTI, HEWITT, JOHNS, LAFLEUR, LAMBERT, LUNEAU, MARTINY, MILKOVICH, MILLS, MIZELL, MORRELL, MORRISH, PEACOCK, PERRY, PETERSON, RISER, GARY SMITH, JOHN SMITH, TARVER, THOMPSON, WALSWORTH, WARD AND WHITE AND REPRESENTATIVE SMITH

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To commend posthumously Reverend Dr. T.J. Jemison Sr. upon his induction into the Louisiana Political Museum and Hall of Fame.

WHEREAS, Theodore Judson Jemison was born in 1918 in Selma, Alabama as the youngest of six children of Henrietta and David Jemison; and

WHEREAS, his father was the pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church, which Rev. T.J. Jemison later filled his father's shoes in the ministry; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Jemison was known as a visionary and very charismatic man; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Jemison was a longtime Louisiana pastor, pioneering civil rights leader, and founder of one of the nation's most effective faith-based civil rights organizations, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) along with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rev. Ralph Abernathy, and Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Jemison attended public segregated schools and earned a bachelor's degree from Alabama State University where he also pledged Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity and later enrolled in graduate school at New York University; and

WHEREAS, he then earned a divinity degree at Virginia Union University in preparation for the immense ministry that he would share with the city of Baton Rouge, state of Louisiana, and the world; and

WHEREAS, in 1953, while serving as the pastor of Mount Zion First Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, a post he held for fifty-four years, Rev. Jemison helped to lead the first civil rights boycott of segregated seating on public buses; and

WHEREAS, in 1953 he persuaded the Baton Rouge City Council to abolish a public transportation rule barring blacks from sitting in the first ten rows of public buses and when bus drivers went on strike to protest the change, Rev. Jemison led an eight-day boycott establishing a carpool organization for African Americans who accounted for eighty percent of the city's bus ridership; and

WHEREAS, the dispute ended in a compromise that only the first two rows would be reserved for whites; and

WHEREAS, in 2003, the fiftieth anniversary of the Baton Rouge bus boycott was honored with three days of events in the city; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Jemison was instrumental in the planning of the year-long Montgomery bus boycott which led to the beginning of the end of separate but equal accommodations in the South; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Jemison served faithfully as the first secretary of SCLC for many years alongside Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Jemison also served as the president of the National Baptist Convention USA Inc., the largest black religious organization in the United States; and

WHEREAS, it had been a nonpolitical organization when Rev. Jemison was elected president in 1982 but he quickly began staking out firm, liberal positions on race-related issues, accusing President Ronald Reagan of giving "respectability to racism", supporting the presidential candidacies of the Rev. Jesse Jackson in 1984 and 1988 and, in 1991, opposing the Persian Gulf War, which he called "a fight over oil"; and

WHEREAS, as president of the National Baptist Convention USA from 1982 to 1994, which he ushered into being the Baptist World Center in Nashville, Tennessee, the first national headquarters of a predominantly black religious organization in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Jemison died in Baton Rouge at the age of ninety-five and his body lay in repose at the Louisiana State Capitol on November 22, 2013, the fiftieth anniversary of the assassination of John F. Kennedy; and

WHEREAS, services were conducted on November 23rd by Rene F. Brown, Jemison's successor pastor at Mt. Zion First Baptist Church in Baton Rouge; and

WHEREAS, Lieutenant Governor Jay Dardenne said that despite national prominence, Jemison's most important role was as shepherd of this flock and his church; and

WHEREAS, Attorney General Buddy Caldwell quoted Psalms 37:27: "the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord", and likened Jemison's life to the Statue of Liberty: he "gave us a torch to light the way"; and

WHEREAS, United States Representative Cedric Richmond, described himself and other African-American legislators as "direct beneficiaries of the hard work, commitment, and courage of Dr. Jemison", and reading a statement of President Barack H. Obama, Richmond described Jemison as "part of the generation that challenged the conscience of our nation and moved us toward justice and equality for all".

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend posthumously Reverend Dr. T.J. Jemison Sr. for his numerous accomplishments and upon his induction into the Louisiana Political Museum and Hall of Fame.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the family of Reverend Dr. T.J. Jemison Sr.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES