

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 35

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

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To express the sincere condolences of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the death of William Franklin "Billy" Graham Jr., well known as "America's pastor" and a much admired and beloved Christian preacher.

WHEREAS, William Franklin Graham Jr. was born on the outskirts of Charlotte, North Carolina, at his parents', William and Morrow Graham, dairy farm on November 7, 1918, and he died at his home in Montreat, North Carolina, on February 21, 2018, at the age of ninety-nine; and

WHEREAS, Billy Graham was the oldest of four children and throughout his childhood he awakened at three a.m. to help his father and his uncle with the milking and countless other chores on the family dairy farm; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Graham credited his upbringing on the dairy farm with instilling in him a strong work ethic and teaching him "that laziness was one of the worst evils" which was an important tenet throughout his life; and

WHEREAS, at the age of sixteen, Billy Graham affirmed his commitment to the Lord and was born again to a life directed by his Lord and savior; after high school, he studied at the Florida Bible Institute, now Trinity College of Florida, and in 1939, he was ordained at Peniel Baptist Church in Palatka, Florida, and began his formal ministry; and

WHEREAS, after his ordination in Florida, Reverend Graham attended Wheaton College in Illinois, where he met Ruth Bell, who he described as a "hazel-eyed movie starlet" and who became the love of his life and the supportive partner in his life's mission of proclaiming the gospel of the Lord and the good news of God's forgiveness; and

WHEREAS, having graduated from Wheaton College with a degree in anthropology, Billy Graham and his beloved Ruth were married on August 13, 1943, beginning a love story that would span nearly sixty-five years and bring into the world three daughters and two sons; and

WHEREAS, during World War II Billy Graham served in the United States Army chaplain corps and in 1944 he was granted a discharge to begin an extensive ministry with, what would become Youth for Christ, traveling around the country, preaching to young audiences; and

WHEREAS, heeding the call to conduct a broad and far-reaching ministry, Reverend Graham continued his youth ministry, conducted his first city-wide crusade in Grand Rapids, Michigan in September 1947, published his first book *Calling Youth to Christ*, and in 1949, he turned his attention to preparations for the "Christ for Greater Los Angeles" crusade held later that year; and

WHEREAS, the Los Angeles crusade brought Reverend Billy Graham to national prominence through extensive media coverage, both in the United States and abroad, as the planned three week event stretched to eight weeks and drained the reverend physically, mentally, and emotionally, but reached three hundred fifty thousand attendees and welcomed the commitment to Christ of thousands; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Graham, in addition to conducting more than four hundred crusades over the decades of his ministry, sought to reach ever bigger audiences by employing the media devices of the day, establishing a radio program in 1950, *Hour of Decision*, that was eventually aired by the American Broadcasting Corporation and followed in 1952 with the publication of his first *My Answer* newspaper column; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Billy Graham was a household name, but that was not enough, he was tireless in broadening his ministry, striving to bring the word of God to as many audiences as possible while setting a standard in his life of transparency, humility, simplicity, and integrity which has rarely been equaled; and

WHEREAS, through the years, Billy Graham and his wife, Ruth, traveled the world, to Africa and the Middle East in 1960, to South Africa in 1973, to the United Kingdom in 1966, 1985, and in 1989 to London where, using satellite technology, the meeting was

broadcast to two hundred fifty locations in Great Britain; and to Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1991, where, using the same technology, the visit was broadcast to twenty additional Spanish-speaking countries; clearly Reverend Graham was untiring in his travels and his outreach throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, when the United States was attacked on September 11, 2001, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association developed a biblically-based grief and trauma training protocol to minister to the victims of that horrendous terrorist attack and that program ultimately developed into the Billy Graham Rapid Response Team, which was deployed to Lafayette, Louisiana, in 2002 to minister to hurricane victims and has since been deployed to more than one hundred fifty disaster zones; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Billy Graham was personally acquainted with more than ten United States presidents, from President Truman through President Obama, and George W. Bush states that Reverend Graham was influential in the lives of the former president and his wife, Laura, often giving credit to Reverend Graham with a critical role in helping President Bush move away from a life without focus and tainted with liquor; and

WHEREAS, at the Reverend's home in Montreat, having traveled with his wife to pay their respects and those of his parents to this Christian icon, the former president stated "if there is such a thing as a humble Shepard of the Lord, Billy Graham is that person"; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Graham was admired by people around the world, including numerous heads of state and many of the twentieth century's most notable leaders, including: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who provided the opening prayer at one of Graham's services during the 1957 New York City Crusade and who accepted the assistance of Reverend Graham in 1965 following the violence at the march in Selma, Alabama, and Queen Elizabeth II, who became an admirer of Reverend Graham early in her reign, another of legions of leaders around the world; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Billy Graham was at Texas A & M University in College Station, Texas on April 10, 2006, to receive the George Bush Award for Public Service from the forty-first president at his presidential library located on the university campus; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Billy Graham and wife, Ruth, were particularly formidable when working as a team and that teamwork was felt both around the world and at home in

Appalachia where they worked for better health care for the children in that area, including a hospital in Asheville, North Carolina, for which the couple received the Congressional Medal of Honor in 1966; and

WHEREAS, at a visit to Angola State Penitentiary in Louisiana, the largest maximum security prison in the nation, early in this century, Reverend Graham, at the prison to dedicate a prisoner-built and privately funded chapel, saw the inmates building simple plywood caskets for the burial of fellow inmates and Reverend Graham and wife, Ruth, were each buried in those plain caskets made by the prisoners at the Angola facility, another sign of their humility and an interesting link to Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, despite his humble beginnings, the Reverend Billy Graham, through the grace of the Lord, brought the good news of God's forgiveness and of eternal life to tens of millions, resulting in commitments to Christ of millions around the world and, while he walked with the politically powerful throughout the world, Billy Graham never held himself above others, but, rather, he was a humble man of God who lived a very public life while holding firm to the teachings of scripture and serving as an example and a testament to living a Christ-centered life.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby express sincere condolences upon the death of William Franklin "Billy" Graham Jr., well known as "America's pastor" and a much admired and beloved Christian preacher.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Reverend Billy Graham's children.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES