

2020 Regular Session

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 62

BY SENATOR PETERSON

CONDOLENCES. Expresses condolences on the death of Terrebonne Parish educator and pioneer, Dr. James Edward Charles.

1 A RESOLUTION

2 To express the sincere and heartfelt condolences of the Senate of the Legislature of  
3 Louisiana upon the death of Dr. James Edward Charles, an African-American  
4 trailblazer in the Terrebonne Parish public school system.

5 WHEREAS, it is with great sadness that Louisiana learned of the death of James  
6 Charles on May 20, 2020, at the age of seventy-seven; and

7 WHEREAS, James Charles, born on June 29, 1942, to Benjamin Sr. and Sadie  
8 Westley Charles, was a native of Terrebonne Parish, and a resident of Houma, Louisiana;  
9 and

10 WHEREAS, his interest in education, as a lifetime force deeply instilled by his  
11 mother Sadie, along with his personal goal of expecting the best of himself and of those he  
12 encountered, was the perfect footprint for his life accomplishments; and

13 WHEREAS, James Charles received his Bachelor, Master, and Honorary Doctorate  
14 degrees from Southern University A&M College; and

15 WHEREAS, Dr. James Charles began his career in 1969 as a math teacher at  
16 Southdown High School in Houma during the year the school was converted from an all  
17 black student body to an integrated elementary school; and

18 WHEREAS, he taught throughout the parish before becoming an elementary math

1 curriculum specialist, an assistant principal, and a coordinator of migrant education; and

2 WHEREAS, in 1988, he was named the first African-American principal at a high  
3 school in Terrebonne Parish at Ellender Memorial High School, a school with a reputation  
4 for being a place where nobody cared to learn; and

5 WHEREAS, under Dr. James Charles' tutelage, the school's image was turned around  
6 and a philosophy was ingrained in the school motto, "If you thought you could, you could.";  
7 and

8 WHEREAS, in 1979, Dr. James Charles began his administrative career as an  
9 assistant principal, served as supervisor of secondary adult and vocational education, and as  
10 Interim Superintendent of Terrebonne; and

11 WHEREAS, during this time many of his co-workers described his keen  
12 administrative skills as charismatic because of his commitment to treating people with  
13 dignity which made him unique; and

14 WHEREAS, Dr. James Charles completed his thirty-three years as an educator as the  
15 first African-American Assistant Superintendent of the Terrebonne Parish School Board; and

16 WHEREAS, he is survived by his wife, Bernadine Poindexter Charles; four  
17 daughters, Tanya Brown, Arlanda J. Williams, Angela Charles, Heather Gobert (Robert); six  
18 grandchildren; Joshua Williams, Chelsea Charles, Jere' Williams, Cody and Carson Brown,  
19 and Roman Gobert; a brother, Leroy Charles; a sister, Joyce Judy Charles-Bolden, and a host  
20 of other relatives and friends; and

21 WHEREAS, he was preceded in death by his parents, five brothers, paternal and  
22 maternal grandparents, and a son-in-law, Dwayne Washington; and

23 WHEREAS, of the many that who blessed to know Dr. James Edward Charles, they  
24 would say he lived out his credos that he taught them: "When you enter a place, enter as a  
25 gentleman. When you leave, always leave as one."

26 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana  
27 does hereby extend sincere condolences to Dr. James Edward Charles' family on the  
28 occasion of his passing.

29 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to his  
30 wife, Bernadine Poindexter Charles.

