

2020 Second Extraordinary Session

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 11

BY SENATORS ALLAIN AND TARVER

CONDOLENCES. Expresses sincere condolences upon the death of Governor Murphy James "Mike" Foster Jr.

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

2 To express the sincere and heartfelt condolences on behalf of the members of the Legislature  
3 of Louisiana, past and present, and the citizens of Louisiana to the family of  
4 Governor Murphy James "Mike" Foster Jr., businessman and statesman.

5 WHEREAS, it is with deep regret and profound sorrow that the members of the  
6 Louisiana Legislature learned of the passing of former governor, Murphy James "Mike"  
7 Foster Jr., at age ninety, on October 4, 2020, in Franklin, Louisiana; and

8 WHEREAS, Murphy James "Mike" Foster Jr. was born on July 11, 1930, in  
9 Shreveport, Louisiana, and raised in Franklin, Louisiana, where as a young man he earned  
10 the rank of Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts of America; and

11 WHEREAS, a committed student of lifelong learning, he graduated from Franklin  
12 High School, received a bachelor's degree in chemistry in 1952 from Louisiana State  
13 University (LSU), and a Juris Doctor in 2004 from Southern University Law Center, and  
14 between his degrees received a certification in welding, fixed wing and helicopter pilots'  
15 licenses, and a twenty-ton boat captain's license; and

16 WHEREAS, he also was a fighter pilot in the United States Air Force, serving in  
17 Korea from 1952 to 1956, attaining the rank of Captain, and upon discharge, he served in  
18 the United States Air Force Reserve; and

1           WHEREAS, after leaving military service, he returned to St. Mary Parish and leased  
2 tracts of land to begin his vocation as a sugar cane farmer; and

3           WHEREAS, in an effort to retain his workforce during the farming off-season, he  
4 founded Bayou Sale Contractors, a company specializing in clearing overgrowth for pipeline  
5 rights-of-way that eventually grew to have more than five hundred employees; and

6           WHEREAS, in 1987, at the age of fifty-eight, Mike Foster entered his first political  
7 campaign as a member of the Democratic Party for the Twenty-first Senatorial District; in  
8 the election, his plain-speaking style and no-nonsense emphasis on solving problems won  
9 the confidence of the voters, and he easily defeated the incumbent senator, starting his career  
10 in public service which would extend over the next sixteen years; and

11           WHEREAS, as a senator, one of his main priorities was overhauling the workers'  
12 compensation insurance system that had left many businesses paying excessive rates to a  
13 shrinking pool of insurance companies; to that end, his most significant legislative  
14 accomplishment was the creation of the Louisiana Workers' Compensation Corporation,  
15 which lives on today and has saved Louisiana employers hundreds of millions of dollars in  
16 rates without reducing the benefits injured workers receive; and

17           WHEREAS, he switched to the Republican Party in 1995 and qualified as a  
18 candidate for governor; his pledge to run Louisiana "like a business" again resonated with  
19 voters, and in 1996, Senator Mike Foster became Governor Mike Foster, one hundred four  
20 years after his grandfather Governor Murphy J. Foster held that same office; and

21           WHEREAS, upon his gubernatorial election, Governor Foster assembled a cabinet  
22 and senior staff and directed them to "Do The Right Thing", a mantra by which he lived, the  
23 standard to which he held his staff, and by which he insisted that Louisiana government  
24 serve its citizens; and

25           WHEREAS, the eight years of his administration saw many successes including  
26 focused efforts on workforce development such as the establishment of the Louisiana  
27 Community and Technical College System, the creation of a statewide worker training  
28 policy board called the Louisiana Workforce Commission (known today as the Louisiana  
29 Workforce Investment Council), the development of the occupational information system  
30 to bring awareness to rapidly growing occupations and industries, and the creation of the

1 Incumbent Worker Training Program to improve the quality of Louisiana's workforce, the  
2 modernization of the Quality Jobs Act to reward employers for the growing jobs with health  
3 insurance benefits, the expansion of the film and video production incentives, and the  
4 creation of the research and development and technology commercialization tax credits; and

5 WHEREAS, Governor Foster's administration also diligently worked to increase  
6 teacher pay; to create charter schools, the LA-4 Pre-K Program, and the school and district  
7 accountability framework; and perhaps one of his greatest legacies, the creation of the Taylor  
8 Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) Scholarship Program that has provided  
9 scholarships for tens of thousands of students over the past two decades; and

10 WHEREAS, early in his administration, Governor Foster pushed the legislature to  
11 restore balance in the legal system, then shifted his focus to paying down state debt while  
12 investing hundreds of millions of dollars into accomplishing sorely needed deferred  
13 maintenance and technology upgrading of many public buildings; his administration also  
14 brought state government to a central location by constructing state office buildings near the  
15 state capitol, which centralization revitalized a dying downtown Baton Rouge; and

16 WHEREAS, his administration made restoring Louisiana's vanishing coast a national  
17 issue as well as a statewide priority, presenting constitutional amendments to the legislature  
18 and the public that required new federal funding to be dedicated to coastal restoration; and

19 WHEREAS, in 2002, his administration negotiated for the New Orleans Saints  
20 professional football team to stay in New Orleans with little financial risk to the state,  
21 approved the construction of the Smoothie King Center so Louisiana could secure a National  
22 Basketball Association franchise, and also spearheaded the building of the renowned New  
23 Orleans Center for the Creative Arts, the finest performing, visual, literary, and culinary arts  
24 program in any secondary school in the nation; and

25 WHEREAS, his administration fought fraud, abuse, and runaway spending in the  
26 Medicaid program to ensure that revenue was available for the Children's Health Insurance  
27 Program (LaCHIP), and brought the charity hospital system under the supervision and  
28 professionalism of the LSU system; and

29 WHEREAS, he strongly supported the "Stelly Plan" that strategically swapped  
30 income taxes for certain sales taxes approved by the voters in 2002, and stabilized state

1 finances, ending the repeated pattern of budgeting by crisis and increasing Louisiana's Wall  
2 Street bond ratings; and

3 WHEREAS, Governor Foster sincerely believed that the people have a right to know  
4 what their government is doing and why, and during his first term, he had a weekly radio  
5 program, taking telephone calls from listeners about government and answering every  
6 question or taking the name and phone number of the person calling and having the  
7 appropriate person call back with an answer to the question; and

8 WHEREAS, he was the first Republican governor elected for consecutive terms since  
9 Reconstruction and when he left office in 2004, Louisiana was in a dramatically better place  
10 financially and the foundation had been laid for future success in all areas of state  
11 government; and

12 WHEREAS, for those who were lucky enough to serve with him or work with him,  
13 it was his genuine humility and generosity that made him an inspiration to others and a true  
14 leader; and

15 WHEREAS, he credited his success as a legislator and as governor to his nonpartisan  
16 approach to government, always putting Louisiana's needs and priorities first; and

17 WHEREAS, an avid outdoorsman, he will also be remembered for his love of fishing  
18 along the Louisiana coast and hunting in southwest Louisiana on Pecan Island, as well as  
19 riding his motorcycle and playing tennis; and

20 WHEREAS, Governor Foster was a loving husband to his wife of more than fifty  
21 years, Alice C. Foster, and father to his son Murphy J. Foster III (Diane) and daughter  
22 Ramelle Foster, and sons, Paul West (Lisette) and Trey West (Sandra), and a grandfather to  
23 nine grandchildren and five great-grandchildren; and

24 WHEREAS, the success of the state of Louisiana, the strength of its communities,  
25 and the overall vitality of American society depend in great measure upon people like  
26 Murphy James "Mike" Foster Jr.; and

27 WHEREAS, with the death of Governor Murphy James "Mike" Foster Jr., Louisiana  
28 has lost one of its finest sons, a quintessential southern gentleman who loved his community  
29 and whose accomplishments have left an indelible mark upon his community, state, and  
30 nation.

1           THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby  
2           express sincere and heartfelt condolences upon the death of Governor Murphy James "Mike"  
3           Foster Jr., and does hereby record for posterity his outstanding achievements, and extend  
4           enduring appreciation for the tremendous pride and honor he will forever bring to the  
5           Franklin community, the state of Louisiana, and the United States of America.

6           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the  
7           family of Governor Murphy James "Mike" Foster Jr.

---

The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part  
of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Dawn Romero Watson.

---

DIGEST

SCR 11 Original

2020 Second Extraordinary Session

Allain

Expresses condolences upon the death of Murphy James "Mike" Foster Jr.