

2021 Regular Session

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 77

BY SENATOR FOIL

CONDOLENCES. Expresses condolences upon the death of James H. (Jim) Wharton, former LSU chancellor.

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

2 To express the sincere condolences of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the passing of
3 James H. (Jim) Wharton, PhD, former chancellor of Louisiana State University at
4 Baton Rouge and to recognize his lifetime of achievements.

5 WHEREAS, it is with deep regret and profound sorrow that the members of the
6 Legislature of Louisiana have learned of the passing of James H. (Jim) Wharton, on May 22,
7 2021, at age eighty-three; and

8 WHEREAS, Jim was born to John Henry and Faye Walling Wharton on July 23,
9 1937, just outside of Mangum, Oklahoma, and married Joan McPherson on November 23,
10 1956, in West Monroe, Louisiana; and

11 WHEREAS, he earned his PhD in chemical physics from LSU in 1962 and served
12 as an assistant professor of chemistry for the remainder of the year; and

13 WHEREAS, Jim served in the United States Army Ordnance Corps from 1963 to
14 1965 where he was assigned to the Marshall Space Flight Center to work on the Saturn V
15 moon landing program for NASA; and

16 WHEREAS, at Dean A.R. Choppin's request, he returned to LSU in 1965 as an
17 Assistant Professor and was promoted to Associate Dean of the College of Chemistry and
18 Physics in 1968; and

1 WHEREAS, Jim was named Dean of the Junior Division in 1971 where he
2 automated student records for the first time in LSU history; and

3 WHEREAS, in 1974, Chancellor Paul Murrill promoted Jim to Dean of the General
4 College where he had twelve thousand students and was responsible for The Junior Division,
5 University College, The Admissions Office, The Registrars Office, Student Aid, and High
6 School Relations; and

7 WHEREAS, in 1979, the LSU Board of Supervisors sent Dr. Wharton to serve as
8 Chancellor of LSU in Alexandria during a difficult period in the history of that campus; and

9 WHEREAS, Jim was chosen by the LSU Board of Supervisors to be Chancellor of
10 Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College in 1981 and served until
11 1989; and

12 WHEREAS, Dr. Wharton taught Chemistry from 1990 through May 2008 when he
13 fully retired from the university; and

14 WHEREAS, during his eight-year tenure as LSU's third Chancellor, he steered the
15 state's flagship institution of higher learning to unprecedented progress while guiding the
16 institution through one of its most difficult financial periods and, through much adversity,
17 he made major improvements in the quality of the university's faculty and students, its
18 academic standards, its private fundraising programs, and its research effort, while
19 contending with continual state budget cuts; and

20 WHEREAS, in 1982, he pushed to create the Louisiana Endowment Trust Fund for
21 Eminent Scholars which became a reality in 1983 and was the forerunner of today's support
22 program for faculty chairs and professorships; and

23 WHEREAS, LSU's first admission standards were approved in 1984 for
24 implementation in 1988, the ACT score improved for entering freshman students, and the
25 graduation rate improved from thirty-three percent to forty-seven percent; and

26 WHEREAS, the hallmark of his administration was the Quality Trust Program,
27 designed to upgrade instruction and research and to maintain LSU's statewide "flagship"
28 status as Louisiana's premier comprehensive university; and

29 WHEREAS, Dr. Wharton was also responsible for reorganizing and streamlining the
30 university's internal administration and succeeded in bringing peak efficiency to LSU

1 operations which boasted the lowest per student overhead cost of any comparable national
2 institution; and

3 WHEREAS, funding from outside grants from state, federal, and private sources
4 increased dramatically and LSU's research grants went from \$17 million to more than \$50
5 million per year and funds from private gifts also increased significantly; and

6 WHEREAS, in 1987, the Carnegie Foundation designated LSU as a "Research
7 University I", the highest advanced-research ranking given by the foundation which put LSU
8 in a group of forty-five public and twenty-five private universities; and

9 WHEREAS, the LSU Foundation was converted from a system foundation to a
10 private foundation and its assets increased from \$7 million in 1981 to \$45 million in 1989;
11 private funds on deposit with the university increased from \$2 million to \$12 million; and
12 great progress was made toward building a strong and very active LSU Alumni Association;
13 and

14 WHEREAS, the bylaws and articles of incorporation for Tiger Athletic Foundation
15 (TAF) were written and the organization undertook the first major improvement of athletic
16 facilities with private funds; and

17 WHEREAS, an office of technology transfer which has brought in more than \$10
18 million was created and, near the end of his term as chancellor, Jim raised \$8.5 million in
19 private funds toward the purchase of a \$17 million supercomputer that had a significant
20 impact on the future of the university; and

21 WHEREAS, after serving as chancellor he remained as a fund raiser and highly
22 regarded teacher, continuing a long tradition of volunteer service to the state and LSU; and

23 WHEREAS, he served as chairman of the committee which oversaw the
24 implementation of federal and state laws providing for the appropriate education of all
25 handicapped children; he handled the political, economic, and contractual issues required
26 to bring the LASER Interferometer Gravity-Wave Observatory to Louisiana, which later
27 proved, and fulfilled the last prediction of Einstein's general theory of relativity; and

28 WHEREAS, Jim served as chair of the scientific team advising the state on the
29 proper disposal of oilfield wastes, chair of the advisory committee on 8-G expenditures for
30 the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, chair of the capital construction

1 committee for renovations and additions to the University Laboratory School, and consultant
2 to the state on desegregation; and

3 WHEREAS, he worked with Patrick Taylor as a volunteer on the TOPS program,
4 later served as a consultant to Mr. Taylor on access to higher education, and after Mr.
5 Taylor's death, he continued his service as a consultant to Mrs. Taylor while a board member
6 of the Patrick F. Taylor Foundation; and

7 WHEREAS, Dr. Wharton served as a higher education consultant to the state of
8 Mississippi and to the University of Alabama System; and

9 WHEREAS, he was named the LSU Alumnus of the year for 2005 and received
10 commendations for his service to the state and the university from the Louisiana Senate, the
11 Louisiana House of Representatives and in a proclamation by the governor; and

12 WHEREAS, he was preceded in death by his sister, Margaret Caffey, and his parents;
13 and

14 WHEREAS, he is survived by his wife of sixty-four years, Joan McPherson
15 Wharton; two children, Sherri Wharton Hadskey and John Scott Wharton and his wife
16 Bridget; five grandsons, Beau (Ashby) and Alex Hadskey and Jake (Camille), Sam and Will
17 Wharton; two sisters, Kathryn Wharton and Nancy Drummond; and one brother, Sam
18 Wharton; and

19 WHEREAS, Jim Wharton was a generous man possessing an abundance of interests
20 and skills, whose intellect and leadership brought tremendous success to the LSU system,
21 whose positive effects on the university are still prevalent, and whose memory shall remain
22 one of humility, humanity, and compassion.

23 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby
24 express sincere condolences upon the passing of James H. (Jim) Wharton PhD, the third
25 chancellor of Louisiana State University.

26 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to his
27 widow, Joan McPherson Wharton.

The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Jerry J. Guillot.

DIGEST
SCR 77 Original 2021 Regular Session Foil

Expresses condolences upon the passing of James H. (Jim) Wharton PhD, former LSU chancellor.