

2021 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 128

BY REPRESENTATIVE SELDERS

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To commend the Louisiana Art & Science Museum on its sixtieth anniversary.

WHEREAS, on July 24, 1962, the Louisiana Art & Science Museum (LASM) was granted its 501(c)3 nonprofit status to enhance the understanding and appreciation of art and science for general audiences and students by presenting unique, educational, and entertaining experiences that encourage discovery, inspire creativity, and foster the pursuit of knowledge; and

WHEREAS, in 1988, the city-parish government purchased the old Yazoo & Mississippi Valley Passenger Railway Station from the Illinois Central Railroad for \$100,000 and leased the building to the LASM for a term of 99 years, through 2087; in 1998, the old train depot was placed on the National Register of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, in 1998, the LASM entered into an agreement with both the state and the city for a \$16.8 million project to build a planetarium, atrium, education rooms, and exhibits at the south end of the building; in 1999, the Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation funded an endowment for the operations of the planetarium; and

WHEREAS, on May 22, 2003, the LASM opened the Irene W. Pennington Planetarium and ExxonMobil Space Theater; the planetarium, with its 60-foot dome, and seating for 171, is, to this day, one of the largest and most technologically advanced planetariums in the southeast United States and is the largest, most technologically advanced in the state of Louisiana; since its inception in 2003, the Irene W. Pennington Planetarium has welcomed over one million visitors; and

WHEREAS, in 2019 LASM welcomed over 175,000 program participants, of whom over 105,000 were K-12 students from over forty parishes in Louisiana and five counties in Mississippi, and of whom over 18% were tourists; and

WHEREAS, in 2020, having survived the shutdowns encountered by nearly one-third of the nation's museums as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, with a 72% reduction in earnings, staffing, and visitation as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, the LASM remained open to the public, as mandates allowed, and created a free-access, virtual museum and digital learning platform to engage isolated individuals and quarantined audiences, including those in healthcare and hospice facilities; over 40,000 individuals were provided virtual and onsite programs in 2020; and

WHEREAS today, the LASM and Irene W. Pennington Planetarium remains open and accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, a standard held by only six percent of museums nationwide and houses over 4,000 objects of art, including Louisiana modern and contemporary art, American, and European art, and scientific objects and antiques including an authentic mummy housed in one of the only permanent ancient Egypt galleries in the southeastern United States; and

WHEREAS today, the LASM has secured over one-half million dollars in relief funding; as a Blue Star Museum, veterans, active military, first responders, and their families receive free admission year-round; and

WHEREAS today, in partnership with local corporations, over 3,000 high-needs students are being provided STEAM-based virtual education programs to introduce students to concepts and careers in STEAM-based occupations; and

WHEREAS, the LASM has begun rehiring and has begun preparing to welcome students back to the museum in the fall.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend the Louisiana Art & Science Museum on its sixtieth anniversary and its endurance despite the challenges encountered as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby recognize the Louisiana Art & Science Museum for educating our region's youth in both art and science to reduce drop-out rates and increase workforce development in STEAM-based careers.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby support the Louisiana Art & Science Museum and Irene W. Pennington Planetarium in its commitment to serving the general public, students, and tourists and to advancing Louisiana's educational, cultural and economic development.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Serena Pandos, executive director of the Louisiana Art and Science Museum.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE