

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 7

BY SENATOR WHEAT AND REPRESENTATIVE COATES

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To designate Tuesday, April 7, 2026, as Ponchatoula Strawberry Festival Day at the Louisiana State Capitol.

WHEREAS, the Louisiana strawberry is the official state fruit of Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, strawberries comprise about \$8,300,000 in total gross farm value in Tangipahoa Parish and more than \$12,000,000 statewide; and

WHEREAS, the fifty-fourth annual Ponchatoula Strawberry Festival will be held April 10-12, 2026, at Memorial Park in the beautiful and historic city of Ponchatoula; and

WHEREAS, organized in 1971, the first Ponchatoula Strawberry Festival was held in April of 1972, co-sponsored by the Ponchatoula Jaycees and the Ponchatoula Chamber of Commerce, as each organization provided three of its members to serve on the initial festival board; and

WHEREAS, the initial intent of the board was to host a festival to provide an opportunity for local charitable organizations to raise money for their clubs, to honor all of the hardworking local strawberry farmers, and to promote the strawberry industry; and

WHEREAS, for over fifty years, the Ponchatoula Strawberry Festival has become a venue for fund-raising by nonprofit and charitable organizations while celebrating the rich agricultural heritage and vibrant community spirit of Ponchatoula, the "Strawberry Capital of the World"; and

WHEREAS, each year, distinguished individuals are chosen to serve as festival royalty, representing the festival and its traditions with honor, pride, and enthusiasm; and

WHEREAS, the 2026 Louisiana Strawberry Queen LIV, Aubrey Renee' Brumfield, is honored with this esteemed title to signify her role as an ambassador of the festival and the values it upholds; and

WHEREAS, the 2026 Ponchatoula Strawberry Festival King LIV is David Atkins, who was selected for his dedication to the festival and the community; and

WHEREAS, the 2026 Ponchatoula Strawberry Festival Blossom is Heather Robertson, who exemplifies grace and community involvement and is particularly recognized for her contributions and commitment to the festival and the farming industry; and

WHEREAS, the 2026 Ponchatoula Strawberry Festival Grand Marshal is Emily McKneely Matisse; she is given the prestigious role of leading the festival parade, an honor reserved for those who have demonstrated exceptional dedication to the Ponchatoula community; and

WHEREAS, the 2026 Festival Chairman, Rueben Auter, has provided invaluable leadership and direction in ensuring the continued success of the Ponchatoula Strawberry Festival, making this event a cherished tradition for locals and visitors alike; and

WHEREAS, the contributions of these individuals to the Ponchatoula Strawberry Festival reflect their passion for preserving the culture and history of this renowned event, which continues to bring joy and economic benefits to the region; and

WHEREAS, the Ponchatoula Strawberry Festival attracts both young and old to its annual celebration of Ponchatoula's legendary delicacy, with food booths featuring popular choices like strawberry shortcakes and deep-fried strawberries; and

WHEREAS, the Ponchatoula Strawberry Festival has the unique status as one of the only festivals at which nonprofit organizations are the only vendors on the official festival grounds.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby designate Tuesday, April 7, 2026, as Ponchatoula Strawberry Festival Day at the Louisiana State Capitol and does hereby recognize the wonderful activities of this exceptional festival and its contributions to the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the chairman of the Ponchatoula Strawberry Festival.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES