

Regular Session, 2013

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 23

BY REPRESENTATIVE BROSSETT

COMMENDATIONS: Commends Chief Justice Johnson on being honored by the Louis A. Martinet Legal Society, Inc., on her many accomplishments and contributions to the legal profession

1 A RESOLUTION

2 To commend the Honorable Bernette J. Johnson on being honored by the Greater New
3 Orleans Louis A. Martinet Legal Society, Inc., for becoming the first African
4 American to serve as Chief Justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court.

5 WHEREAS, Justice Bernette J. Johnson received a Bachelor of Arts degree from
6 Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, and later received an Honorary Doctorate in Law from
7 Spelman in April, 2001; and

8 WHEREAS, Justice Johnson was one of the first African American women to attend
9 law school at Louisiana State University (LSU), where she received her Juris Doctorate
10 degree in 1969; and

11 WHEREAS, while in law school, Justice Johnson worked summers for the Legal
12 Defense Fund and as a law clerk for the Civil Rights Division of the United States
13 Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., handling cases filed by the department to
14 implement the 1964 Civil Rights Act; and

15 WHEREAS, Justice Johnson also served as a federal observer during elections in
16 Greenwood, Mississippi; and

17 WHEREAS, after receiving her Juris Doctorate degree, Justice Johnson became the
18 managing attorney with the New Orleans Legal Assistance Corporation, where she delivered
19 legal services to more than three thousand clients in socioeconomically deprived
20 neighborhoods; and

1 WHEREAS, prior to her election to the bench, Justice Johnson spent much of her
2 legal career working in the public sector as a legal services attorney, a Deputy City Attorney
3 for the city of New Orleans, and as a law clerk with the United States Justice Department,
4 Civil Rights Division; and

5 WHEREAS, Justice Johnson also worked as a community organizer with the
6 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Legal Defense and
7 Educational Fund in New York City and with community groups in Alabama, Mississippi,
8 Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Louisiana, disseminating
9 information about recent school desegregation decisions and encouraging parents to take
10 advantage of newly desegregated schools; and

11 WHEREAS, Justice Johnson also helped to organize household workers so they
12 would receive social security benefits and a minimum wage; and

13 WHEREAS, Justice Johnson's judicial career began in 1984, when she was elected
14 to the Orleans Parish Civil District Court as the first woman to hold that office, and she was
15 re-elected without opposition in 1990 before being elected Chief Judge by her colleagues in
16 1994; and

17 WHEREAS, as a civil trial judge, Justice Johnson was first assigned to Domestic
18 Relations Court, where she established a system to refer custody, alimony, and child support
19 issues to mediation prior to court appearances and provided that such mediation be provided
20 to needy families based on a sliding scale system for payment of fees; and

21 WHEREAS, Justice Johnson was elected to serve on the Louisiana Supreme Court
22 in 1994 and was re-elected without opposition in 2000; and

23 WHEREAS, Justice Johnson serves on the Louisiana Supreme Court's Judicial
24 Council, has served on the Court's Legal Services Task Force, has served on the National
25 Campaign on Best Practices in the area of Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Court, and has
26 worked closely with the Court's Mandatory Continuing Legal Education Committee and the
27 Committee on Bar Admissions; and

28 WHEREAS, Justice Johnson provided extraordinary leadership to the Louisiana
29 Judiciary in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina by facilitating the efforts to restore the
30 operations of all courts in the New Orleans area; and

1 WHEREAS, during her tenure on the Louisiana Supreme Court, Justice Johnson has
2 diversified the Committee on Bar Admissions by increasing minority participation and
3 leadership on that committee; and

4 WHEREAS, Justice Johnson organized the first Continuing Legal Education (CLE)
5 program for the Louis A. Martinet Legal Society, was chair of the CLE Committee, and was
6 given the Martinet's President Award in 1997 and 2008; and

7 WHEREAS, Justice Johnson is a Fleur De Lis member of the New Orleans Bar
8 Association, is active with several committees of the Louisiana State Bar Association
9 (LSBA), and was presented with the LSBA's President Award in 2005 for her work as
10 cochair of the Diversity Committee; and

11 WHEREAS, in 1998, Justice Johnson chaired the National Bar Association Judicial
12 Council, served a term as secretary, and is currently a member of the A.P. Tureaud Inns of
13 Court, the Louisiana State Law Institute, and the National Association of Women Judges,
14 serving as a district director, and is active with the Women in Prison Project; and

15 WHEREAS, in 1996, Justice Johnson's portrait was unveiled as she was inducted into
16 the LSU Law Center Hall of Fame; and

17 WHEREAS, Justice Johnson is the proud parent of a son and a daughter: David, an
18 accountant who lives in Atlanta with his family, and Rachael, who is an attorney licensed
19 to practice law in Florida and Louisiana; and

20 WHEREAS, on April 6, 2013, at its annual gala, the Greater New Orleans Louis A.
21 Martinet Legal Society, Inc., honored Justice Johnson for becoming the first African
22 American to serve as Chief Justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court; and

23 WHEREAS, Justice Johnson merits a special measure of commendation for the
24 tremendous pride and honor that she brings to the state of Louisiana.

25 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Louisiana House of Representatives of
26 the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend the Honorable Bernette J. Johnson on
27 being honored by the Greater New Orleans Louis A. Martinet Legal Society, Inc., on
28 becoming the first African American to serve as Chief Justice of the Louisiana Supreme
29 Court, does hereby record for posterity her noteworthy ascension in the legal field and her

1 outstanding contributions to both the legal profession and her fellow citizens, and extends
2 to her best wishes for continued success and happiness in all future endeavors.

3 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that a suitable copy of this Resolution be
4 transmitted to Chief Justice Bernette J. Johnson.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

Brossett

HR No. 23

Commends Chief Justice Bernette J. Johnson on her recognition by the Louis A. Martinet Legal Society, Inc. for become the first African American to serve as Chief Justice of the La. Supreme Court and for her many accomplishments.