

Regular Session, 2014

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 194

BY REPRESENTATIVES JAMES, BADON, BARROW, WESLEY BISHOP, BURRELL,  
COX, DIXON, FRANKLIN, GAINES, HONORE, HUNTER, KATRINA  
JACKSON, JEFFERSON, TERRY LANDRY, NORTON, PIERRE, PRICE,  
SMITH, THIERRY, ALFRED WILLIAMS, PATRICK WILLIAMS, AND  
WOODRUFF

CONDOLENCES: Expresses condolences upon the death of famed poet and author Dr.  
Maya Angelou

1 A RESOLUTION

2 To express the condolences of the House of Representatives upon the death of famed poet,  
3 author, and activist, Dr. Maya Angelou.

4 WHEREAS, it is with deep regret and profound sorrow that the Louisiana House of  
5 Representatives has learned of the death of Dr. Maya Angelou, at the age of eighty-six, at  
6 her home in Winston-Salem, North Carolina; and

7 WHEREAS, charismatic and passionate, warm and wise, formidable without being  
8 forbidding, Maya Angelou's life was a gift to the world; she shared her talents so selflessly  
9 as a professor, singer, dancer, actress, author, poet, and activist, and it is appropriate to  
10 commemorate her life and legacy; and

11 WHEREAS, Marguerite Johnson was born on April 4, 1928, in St. Louis, Missouri,  
12 to Vivian Baxter Johnson and Bailey Johnson; she grew up between St. Louis and Stamps,  
13 Arkansas, and spent her early years studying dance and drama in San Francisco before  
14 dropping out at age fourteen, instead becoming the city's first African-American female  
15 cable car conductor; and

16 WHEREAS, due to tragic and unfortunate events in her childhood, Maya did not  
17 speak for many years as an adolescent; out of her silence, a star of world-famed magnitude  
18 was born; and

1           WHEREAS, Maya later returned to high school to finish her diploma and gave birth  
2 a few weeks after graduation; as she waited tables to support her son, she acquired a passion  
3 for music and dance; and

4           WHEREAS, Maya toured Europe in the mid-1950s in the opera production "Porgy  
5 and Bess"; in 1957, she recorded her first album, "Calypso Lady"; and

6           WHEREAS, in 1958, Angelou become a part of the Harlem Writers Guild in New  
7 York and so played a queen in "The Blacks," an off-Broadway production by French  
8 dramatist Jean Genet; and

9           WHEREAS, Dr. Angelou worked as a coordinator for the Southern Christian  
10 Leadership Conference, and lived for years in Egypt and Ghana, where she met Nelson  
11 Mandela, who became a lifelong friend, and Malcolm X, whom she remained close to until  
12 his assassination, in 1965; and

13           WHEREAS, Dr. Angelou was also a close friend of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; she  
14 helped King organize the Poor People's March in Memphis, Tennessee, where the civil rights  
15 leader was slain on her fortieth birthday; and

16           WHEREAS, in 1971, Angelou published the Pulitzer Prize-nominated poetry  
17 collection "Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water 'Fore I Die"; and

18           WHEREAS, Dr. Angelou's most revered and acclaimed work was "I Know Why the  
19 Caged Bird Sings", which was described as a work of art which eludes description, a tough,  
20 funny, lyrical voice that transforms her story from a litany of isolation and suffering into a  
21 hymn of glorious human endurance; it made literary history as the first nonfiction best-seller  
22 by an African-American woman; and

23           WHEREAS, Dr. Angelou was most famous for her poems and books, which were  
24 uplifting, inspiring, and motivating literary masterpieces; in 1993, she was asked to recite  
25 her famous classic, "On the Pulse of Morning" at President Bill Clinton's inauguration in  
26 1993 and for President George W. Bush, she read "Amazing Peace," at the 2005 Christmas  
27 tree lighting ceremony at the White House; and

28           WHEREAS, in 2011, President Barack Obama awarded Dr. Angelou with the  
29 country's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom; she also received

1 presidential recognition with a National Medal of Arts and an honorary National Book  
2 Award; and

3 WHEREAS, Dr. Angelou was also one of the first black women film directors; her  
4 work on Broadway was nominated for Tony Awards in addition to countless other honors  
5 she received throughout her lifetime, including thirty honorary degrees, two NAACP Image  
6 Awards, and three Grammy awards; and

7 WHEREAS, Dr. Angelou was a role model to millions across the globe; her work  
8 inspired dignitaries and heads of state around the world and she will be remembered as a  
9 Renaissance woman, a cultural pioneer, and a beacon of hope and light; and

10 WHEREAS, Dr. Angelou's life was a gift to the world and it is wholly appropriate  
11 to express condolences upon her death; she leaves behind a rich, renowned history of literary  
12 works and poems that will forever speak of the profoundness and greatness of Dr. Maya  
13 Angelou.

14 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the  
15 Legislature of Louisiana does hereby express condolences upon the death of Dr. Maya  
16 Angelou; does hereby recognize her life as a treasure to the United States and the world;  
17 does hereby commemorate her journey as a black woman born poor who went on to write  
18 and recite the most popular presidential inaugural poem in history; does hereby record for  
19 posterity her contributions as an activist and author who recorded and celebrated the  
20 experience of being black in the United States; and does hereby express the deep regret of  
21 the entire state upon the loss of this legendary and iconic woman.

22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a suitable copy of this Resolution be transmitted  
23 to the family of Dr. Maya Angelou.

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Dr. Angelou once said that she wished to be  
25 remembered as in the closing lines of her famous poem "Still I Rise": "Leaving behind  
26 nights of terror and fear, I rise; Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear, I rise; Bringing the  
27 gifts that my ancestors gave, I am the dream and the hope of the slave; I rise; I rise; I rise".

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)]

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James

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Expresses condolences upon the death of Dr. Maya Angelou.