

2016 Regular Session

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 13

BY SENATOR PEACOCK

CONDOLENCES. Extends condolences upon the death of former Louisiana State Senator, Virginia Ruth Kilpatrick Shehee.

1 A RESOLUTION

2 To express the sincere condolences of the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the
3 death of businesswoman and former Louisiana State Senator, the Honorable Virginia
4 Ruth Kilpatrick Shehee, and to commend the legacy of public service she leaves to
5 the people of her community, state, and nation.

6 WHEREAS, Virginia Shehee passed peacefully from this life on July 6, 2015, less
7 than one week from her ninety-second birthday; she was a living legend in Shreveport and
8 a gentlewoman of abundant social grace and civic acumen; and

9 WHEREAS, Virginia Shehee was a classic lady as well known for her cultural
10 endeavors as her quick wit and contagious smile; she possessed an innate self-confidence,
11 pursued many interests, and supported numerous issues and institutions that were very close
12 to her heart; and

13 WHEREAS, Mrs. Virginia Shehee was an astute business leader in the Ark-La-Tex
14 region who acted as president and CEO of Kilpatrick Life Insurance and Rose-Neath Funeral
15 Homes and Cemeteries, Inc.; and

16 WHEREAS, her exposure to politics began while still a teenager when she spent her
17 summers employed as a secretary for future governor, Jimmie H. Davis; they shared an
18 enduring friendship and, years later, she would support the adoption of "You Are My

1 Sunshine" as the official state song; and

2 WHEREAS, having served a single term representing Senate District 38 from
3 1976-1980, Senator Shehee made history as the first woman to serve in the Louisiana Senate
4 elected on her own merit who did not succeed her spouse; she focused on worthy issues such
5 as right-to-work, improved parish roads, and funding for the arts; and even after her tenure
6 in the Senate, her door remained open to her constituents and any aspiring politicians who
7 sought her counsel; and

8 WHEREAS, Virginia Shehee continued to provide expertise in other facets of state
9 government as a member of the Transition Team on Higher Education for governors Buddy
10 Roemer and Mike Foster, as cochair of the Transition Committee on Ethics for Governor
11 Bobby Jindal, as a member of the Louisiana Governor's Mansion Foundation Board of
12 Directors, and with service on the Judicial Council of the Louisiana Supreme Court; and

13 WHEREAS, born in Houston, Texas, and reared in Shreveport, Louisiana, Virginia
14 Shehee was an involved participant in the betterment of Caddo Parish which was enhanced
15 by ties to her alma maters, C. E. Byrd High School and Centenary College, her family
16 businesses, and her interests in the arts, education, historic preservation, government,
17 medical research, economic growth, humanities, and charitable organizations; very few
18 activities escaped her attention and influence; and

19 WHEREAS, Virginia Shehee supported numerous causes, in particular, entities
20 unique to Shreveport such as the Symphony Orchestra, the Louisiana State Fair and its
21 Junior Livestock Show, and the historic preservation of the Strand Theatre, Oakland
22 Cemetery, and other historic architecture; and

23 WHEREAS, as an alumna of Centenary College with receipt of a bachelor of art's
24 degree in English, 1943, an Honorary Doctor of Laws, 2002, and election to its Alumni Hall
25 of Fame, 1973, Virginia Shehee was honored to serve as a lifetime member of the Board of
26 Trustees, to witness the addition to the campus of Shehee Stadium and Kilpatrick
27 Auditorium, and to encourage two generations of her family members to attend this
28 prestigious institution; and

29 WHEREAS, Mrs. Shehee received honorary degrees and designations from many
30 state universities; she served on the Louisiana State University Board of Supervisors and was

1 named to the LSU Alumni Hall of Distinction; and at LSU-Shreveport she established an
2 endowed academic chair for Insurance and Financial Service and was named a Distinguished
3 Business Executive on Campus; and

4 WHEREAS, Virginia Shehee was well ahead of her time, a trailblazer who broke
5 through "glass ceilings" in business, government, and community development and
6 established new precedents as the first woman to become a member of the Omicron Delta
7 Kappa honor society, to receive the Community Council Special Humanitarian Award for
8 Outstanding Service and the Clyde E. Fant Memorial Award for Community Service, and
9 to be named Business Leader of the Year by the Shreveport Chamber of Commerce and "Mr.
10 Shreveport" by the Optimist Club; and

11 WHEREAS, in the healthcare community she served as chairman emeritus of the
12 Biomedical Research Center Foundation of Northwestern Louisiana, where its research
13 institute was named for Mrs. Shehee in honorable recognition of her tireless guidance and
14 years of service as its most outstanding volunteer; she was also cited by the Shreveport
15 Medical Society with receipt of the award for Outstanding Contribution to the Advancement
16 of Medicine; and she garnered similar awards from the March of Dimes and the Arthritis
17 Foundation; and

18 WHEREAS, under her tutelage, Kilpatrick Life Insurance became the largest
19 domestic life insurer in Louisiana; she served as chairman of the Life Insurers Conference,
20 Louisiana Insurers Conference, Louisiana Life Insurance Guarantee Association, and as a
21 board member of the American Council of Life Insurance; and

22 WHEREAS, economic growth was foremost on her mind to improve the status quo
23 of northwest Louisiana, and Virginia lent her business savvy to promote the lofty goals of
24 the Shreveport Committee of One Hundred, Shreveport-Bossier Community Renewal, the
25 Council For a Better Louisiana, and the Louisiana Committee of 100 for Economic
26 Development; and

27 WHEREAS, her strong commitment to community spanned cultural, civic, and
28 academic spheres and was beneficial to multitudes in a myriad of ways; and

29 WHEREAS, Virginia Shehee was a fervent supporter of the United States Armed
30 Services and felt privileged to serve on the Board of Trustees for the National D-Day

1 Museum in New Orleans; and

2 WHEREAS, Senator Shehee was inducted into the Louisiana Political Hall of Fame
3 in 2004 and was named a Living Legend by the Friends of Louisiana Public Broadcasting
4 in 2006; and

5 WHEREAS, as a person of deep religious conviction, Virginia served as senior
6 warden in St. Paul Episcopal Church and she humbly received the Benemerenti Medal
7 bestowed by Pope John Paul II and presented by Bishop William Friend of the Catholic
8 Diocese of Shreveport for outstanding community service; and

9 WHEREAS, for her generosity and vision, she received a host of awards and honors
10 far too numerous to count; and

11 WHEREAS, one of her most cherished honors was receipt of the Mary Johnston
12 Award for Outstanding Service from the Gardens of the American Rose Society; her mother,
13 Nell Peters Kilpatrick, was instrumental in its establishment in Shreveport; and

14 WHEREAS, while she was humbled by the accolades she received throughout her
15 lifetime, she was most proud of her children and her family's contributions to the betterment
16 of the community; and

17 WHEREAS, she was preceded in death by her loving husband, William Peyton
18 Shehee Jr., and is survived by her son, Andrew Michael; daughters, Ann Shane Shehee, Nell
19 Elizabeth S. Kramer, and Margaret Scott S. Cole; her grandchildren, and a host of extended
20 family and close friends; and

21 WHEREAS, Virginia Shehee was a great lady who will be sorely missed by her
22 community and state and will always be remembered for her love of family, travel, literature,
23 animals, many passions in life, and accomplishments that were achieved by her own hand
24 which resulted in a most fascinating and distinguished life.

25 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana
26 does hereby extend heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Virginia Ruth
27 Kilpatrick Shehee, wife, mother, businesswoman, legislator, community leader, volunteer,
28 Christian, patron, humanitarian, and philanthropist who set an extraordinary standard of
29 graciousness and good citizenship for all to emulate.

30 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to her

