

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 88

BY SENATOR HEWITT

A RESOLUTION

To commend Margaret Narcisse Laurant upon the occasion of her ninetieth birthday.

WHEREAS, Margaret Narcisse Laurant was born on May 18, 1926 in Bonfouca, Louisiana, a settlement where Slidell is today, to Jean Narcisse and Elmonia Vignaul-Pichon; and

WHEREAS, the ancestors of Margaret's husband, Norvell Laurant, initially settled in Bayou Castine, which is today Mandeville, Louisiana, and later established the permanent settlement of Bonfouca; and

WHEREAS, these ancestors, were closely allied with the Acalopissa, Choctaw, and Alabamos Indians, who lived in this area before the coming of the French settlers; and

WHEREAS, Laurant's ancestors established Bonfouca and invited other French families to join them and many families made this settlement their home, including the Narcisse, Carriere, Dubuisson, Galatas, Pichon and Vignaul families; and

WHEREAS, at Bonfouca, many of the families married into one another and maintained a close relationship with the Acalopissa, Choctaw, and Alabamos families; and

WHEREAS, in the early twentieth century, no formal provisions were made for educating children of color, however, in the 1920s a one-room schoolhouse named "Golden Key" was founded and served as an elementary school for the children of Bonfouca; and

WHEREAS, Margaret Narcisse attended elementary school at Golden Key and attended middle school at St. Tammany Parish Training School for Negroes, which provided education beyond the elementary years; and

WHEREAS, the long walk from the bayou area to the training school discouraged Margaret and she soon left school seeking full-time employment to help support her parents and nine siblings; and

WHEREAS, in the 1940s Margaret Narcisse met and fell in love with Norvell Laurant and they were married on January 2, 1946, in Lake Charles, Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, soon after their marriage, Margaret and Norvell left Bonfouca for Columbus, Ohio, where Norvell was stationed with the United States Army Air Force; and

WHEREAS, Norvell's Army Air Force assignment at Lockbourne Army Air Force Base in Ohio brought the Laurants in contact with General Benjamin Davis, one of the Tuskegee Airman from World War II and the first African American to reach the rank of general, who was the commander of the 477th Composite Group, an African-American flying unit; and

WHEREAS, Margaret lovingly supported her husband in his military service, but both longed for home and when Norvell was honorably discharged, the couple returned to Slidell where Norvell built a house for their family, a home where Margaret continues to live today; and

WHEREAS, the Laurants raised seven children: Floyd, Daniel, Reginald, Margaret "Mel", Johanna, Norvell Jr. and Cyril, who are both now deceased; and

WHEREAS, Margaret raised their family with strong Christian values and she and Norvell emphasized the importance of education and of giving back to their community; and

WHEREAS, eventually Mrs. Laurant, determined to pursue her education, enrolled in evening classes at St. Tammany High School, while continuing to work full time; and

WHEREAS, with her newly-acquired education, Margaret worked as a government subcontractor at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) operation in New Orleans where she had the privilege of meeting the first two African-American astronauts, Guion Bluford, the first African American to travel into space, and Ronald McNair, who was later killed in the Challenger disaster in January, 1986; and

WHEREAS, Margaret Laurant still lives in the house on Effie Street that her husband built for her and their family, repaired after damage from Hurricane Katrina, and she continues to enjoy the love and warmth of her large family; and

WHEREAS, in May 2016, Margaret's children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and other family and dear friends will gather to celebrate her ninetieth birthday, which is May 18, 2016, and to honor the life she has lived; and

WHEREAS, Margaret Narcisse Laurant's life has spanned tumultuous times of social and technological change in America and in Louisiana and Margaret was both a witness to and participant in them; from the bringing of education to African-American children and the integration of American society to putting African-American astronauts into space; and

WHEREAS, throughout the tumult and ongoing advancement, Margaret Narcisse Laurant led by example and through this she and Norvell brought their family the realization of the American dream; improved education, greater prosperity, and an appreciation for the strength and formidable courage and for the Christian values by which she continues to live today.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend Margaret Narcisse Laurant upon the occasion of her ninetieth birthday.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Margaret Narcisse Laurant.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE