Regular Session, 2013 **ENROLLED**

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 192

BY SENATORS PEACOCK, ADLEY, ALLAIN, APPEL, BROOME, BROWN, BUFFINGTON, CORTEZ, CROWE, DORSEY-COLOMB, ERDEY, GALLOT, KOSTELKA, LAFLEUR, LONG, MILLS, MURRAY, PERRY, RISER, GARY SMITH, JOHN SMITH, THOMPSON, WALSWORTH, WARD AND WHITE

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Louisiana congressional delegation to review the basis for the discontinuance of funding of the Bossier Sheriff's Young Marines Program through a Juvenile Accountability Block Grant with the United States Department of Justice, Office of Civil Rights.

WHEREAS, since 2002, the Bossier Parish Sheriff's Office has successfully administered the Bossier Sheriff's Young Marines Program, a program sanctioned by the United States Marine Corps which provides community-based physical education programs that are designed to teach young men and women, ages 8 to 18, respect for their bodies through physical fitness, which in return will instill resistance to the temptations of illegal drugs, alcohol and tobacco use; and

WHEREAS, the focus of the program is character-building, along with core values of discipline, leadership, teamwork and commitment and instills into the participants the ideals of honesty, integrity and respect and at-risk youth developing goals for academic success; and

WHEREAS, the program has been partially funded by the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) provided by the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement (LCLE); and

WHEREAS, because of the success of the program, local judges started sentencing court-ordered juveniles to the program as a diversion from jail time; however, the Young Marines Program was never intended to be a "diversion" program and the LCLE staff has

recommended that the Bossier Parish Sheriff's Office create a new separate program, specifically for court-ordered juveniles; and

WHEREAS, in December 2012, the sheriff's office submitted a JABG application for the Bossier Youth Diversion Program which was created similar to the Bossier Sheriff's Young Marines Program, while also incorporating "Character Counts" and "The Great Body Shop", as recommended by LCLE staff, for court-ordered juveniles only; and

WHEREAS, the sheriff's office was advised by the LCLE that pursuant to the direction of the United States Department of Justice, Office for Civil Rights, the program can "NOT include prayer as part of the Diversion program. Any prayer, even if voluntary, needs to be separate in time or location from the Diversion Program activities."; and

WHEREAS, on February 22, 2013, the sheriff's office responded by email to the LCLE, "In response to the prayer issue, the time that was offered for prayer was optional for all of the kids. It was led by any child that wanted to volunteer and if there wasn't a volunteer, it became a few moments of silence."; and

WHEREAS, on March 7, 2013, LCLE responded, at the direction of the United States Department of Justice, requesting an official letter, "...signed by the Sheriff, which states that there will be no prayer activities conducted during the Diversion program..." and that the LCLE, "...will not be able to issue an award until this letter is received."; and

WHEREAS, at that time, the sheriff withdrew the grant request; and

WHEREAS, on February 6, 2013, the Bossier Parish Sheriff's Office submitted a Program Plan Worksheet requesting the one-time Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention funds available for the Bossier Sheriff's Young Marines Program and was denied upon the same grounds involving prayer activities; and

WHEREAS, at this time, the sheriff's office has been divested of funding by the LCLE for both the Bossier Sheriff's Young Marines Program and the Bossier Youth Diversion Program due to prayer and the mention of God in the programs.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the members of the Louisiana congressional delegation are hereby urged and requested to review with the United States Department of Justice, Office of Civil Rights, the basis for the discontinuance of funding of the Bossier Sheriff's Young Marines Program with a Juvenile Accountability Block Grant.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to each member of the Louisiana congressional delegation, the governor, the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement, and the Bossier Parish sheriff.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE