

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 196

BY SENATOR MILKOVICH

A RESOLUTION

To commend Reverend Fred Luter Jr. on his service to the members of the Franklin Avenue Baptist Church and to Southern Baptists across the nation.

WHEREAS, Reverend Luter was born on November 11, 1956, in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, Fred Luter began his ministerial journey with what he describes as his "Damascus road experience", referring to a motorcycle accident in 1977 when he was twenty-one years old, in which he was seriously injured and after which he made a conscious decision to surrender his life entirely to Jesus Christ; and

WHEREAS, after his recovery from the accident, he preached every Saturday on the street corner of Galvez Street and Caffin Avenue in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, where he spread the gospel to all who would listen; and

WHEREAS, as word of his preaching reached a broader audience, he was invited to preach in Baptist churches across the city and in 1983 he preached his first sermon at the Law Street Baptist Church; and

WHEREAS, in September 1986, the small but faithful sixty-five members of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church elected Fred Luter as their pastor at the age of thirty, and Reverend Luter was humbled and honored to serve this church as his first pastorate; and

WHEREAS, at Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, Reverend Luter committed himself to encourage the people by teaching and living the word of God, and he purposefully sought ways to draw men into the church, believing if you save the man, the man will save his family; and

WHEREAS, in a mere three years, the membership of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church grew to three hundred and by 1994 the congregation had outgrown its current sanctuary; and

WHEREAS, Pastor Luter challenged the congregation to increase its tithes in order to support the building of a larger sanctuary, which became a reality when in 1997, the members of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church moved into an eighteen hundred seat sanctuary and by 2005, the church had grown to seven thousand members; and

WHEREAS, another capital campaign was necessary to accommodate the burgeoning congregation and Pastor Luter's vision for a forty-five hundred seat sanctuary, naming the capital campaign, "Committed to Changing More Lives"; and

WHEREAS, the destruction wrought by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 included the near-complete destruction of the church building of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church and scattered its parishioners across the country, but Pastor Luter's commitment to his flock required that he hold services for those still in New Orleans so he arranged for Franklin Avenue's parishioners to hold morning worship services across town, at the First Baptist Church, until the sanctuary could be repaired; and

WHEREAS, Pastor Luter also traveled to Houston, Texas, and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to bring the holy word to those who had lost everything, except their faith, in an effort to encourage parishioners to return to the nearly ruined city; and

WHEREAS, by April 2008, less than three years after the near-total devastation of Hurricane Katrina, Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, its pastor, and congregation were at home once again in the new church, built upon the ruins of their beloved sanctuary; and

WHEREAS, leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention were aware of the phenomenal efforts of Pastor Luter and the success he and his congregation experienced in bringing their church and its parishioners back to their roots on Franklin Avenue; and

WHEREAS, in 2011, Reverend Luter was elected at the Southern Baptist Convention to serve as the denomination's first African-American vice president and in 2012, he was the only candidate on the ballot for the presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention, a turning point for the predominately Caucasian Protestant church, particularly one that had been founded by pro-slavery Baptists in 1845; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, Pastor Luter stepped down as president of the denomination after serving two terms as its president; and

WHEREAS, Pastor Luter traveled this path with the loving support and influence of his wife, Elizabeth; their children, Kimberly Luter Terrell and husband, Howard, and Fred "Chip" Luter III and his wife, Jasmine; and grandchildren, who have all brought joy and gladness into his life; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Fred Luter Jr., beginning his ministry with only his faith to guide him, built a substantial Baptist congregation in New Orleans before Hurricane Katrina, re-established that congregation and re-built its sanctuary in less than three years after the storm, and became the first African-American vice president and then president of the Southern Baptist Convention, which stood as testament to the future and to the resilience of the people of God and of their faith in him, and, perhaps, His faith in them, certainly in Senior Pastor Luter.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend Reverend Fred Luter Jr. on his service to the members of the Franklin Avenue Baptist Church and to Southern Baptists across the nation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Reverend Fred Luter Jr. in care of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, Louisiana.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE