

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 12

BY SENATOR BOUDREAUX

A RESOLUTION

To express the sincere condolences of the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the death of Sammie Wayne Cospers PhD, a veteran of the United States Navy and an outstanding academician over a long career in Louisiana.

WHEREAS, Sammie Wayne Cospers PhD passed away quietly on September 19, 2017, at the age of eighty-three; and

WHEREAS, Sammie Cospers was born on October 8, 1933, in Greggton, Texas, to Sammie Hampton Cospers and Mable Byrd Potter; and

WHEREAS, the Cospers family lived in Ville Platte and Eunice through his youth and upon graduating from Eunice High School in 1951, Dr. Cospers enlisted in the United States Navy where he served as a submariner on the United States Ship Corporal; and

WHEREAS, following his discharge from the U.S. Navy, Sammie Cospers enrolled in Southwestern Louisiana Institute, now the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and he earned a bachelor of science degree, the first in his family to graduate from college; and

WHEREAS, not content with an undergraduate degree, Dr. Cospers enrolled in Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, where he earned his PhD in nuclear physics; and

WHEREAS, Sammie Cospers continued his education with post-doctoral research at the University of California at Berkeley, where he and his colleagues discovered four new isotopes, a significant contribution to the body of knowledge of nuclear physics; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Sammie Cospers and his family returned to Lafayette, Louisiana, in 1967, where he began his post-doctoral academic career at his alma mater, at that point known as the University of Southwestern Louisiana, where he held numerous academic and administrative positions throughout his career; and

WHEREAS, at USL, Sammie Cospers served as the first dean of the newly created

department of physics, dean of liberal arts, and vice president of academic affairs, and after more than twenty years at his alma mater, he retired from the university in 1989; and

WHEREAS, in the course of his service as chief academic officer from 1973 through 1989, Dr. Cospers convened a committee of faculty and administrators to assess the school's goals, which became a blueprint for Dr. Cospers and then president Ray Authement to lead USL in becoming a nationally respected university, conducting groundbreaking research and focusing on superior scholarship; and

WHEREAS, the committee settled on the goals of expanding the university's existing computer science and nursing programs, strengthening its ties to the oil and gas industry, making supporting the preservation of South Louisiana's Cajun and Creole cultures a priority, and assuming a role in the restoration of Louisiana's coastline; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Cospers's academic career was not over when he retired from the university, he served as Commissioner of Higher Education for the state of Louisiana from 1990 through 1994, being tapped for the position by then governor, Charles E. "Buddy" Roemer, and he also was named as interim chancellor of Baton Rouge Community College; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Cospers was active in civic and community affairs in Louisiana, serving as a member of the board of directors of the Council for A Better Louisiana and as a member of the education committee of the Louisiana Association for Business and Industry; and

WHEREAS, Sammie Cospers belonged to community groups in Lafayette including membership in the Krewe of Gabriel, the Krewe of Zeus, and the Krewe of Triton, reigning as King Triton XXIV in 2003; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Cospers's first love was his family and he reveled in his devotion to his wife of sixty-three years, Shirley Aguiard Cospers, and the couple lovingly raised three daughters and enjoyed an active role in the lives of their daughters' families, including grandchildren and great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, throughout his life, Sammie Wayne Cospers PhD preached the value of education and learning by maintaining his passion for education, and he served as a tireless advocate for the university that was his alma mater.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby express its sincere condolences upon the death of United States Navy veteran, revered Louisiana academician, and tireless advocate for education and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Sammie Wayne Cospers PhD.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Shirley Aguiard Cospers, widow of Sammie Wayne Cospers.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE