

1 where he would serve until term limits required the end of that elective service in 2008; and

2 WHEREAS, in 2004, Senator Don Hines was chosen to lead the Senate as president
3 for his last term in the body; and

4 WHEREAS, perhaps the most important legislation that Senator Hines authored was
5 known as the Rural Hospital Preservation Act of 1997 which sought to protect hospitals
6 serving rural populations in Louisiana; and

7 WHEREAS, the legislation provided for reimbursements that would support the rural
8 hospitals in Louisiana and additional protections for those hospitals; and

9 WHEREAS, with a state in which more than sixty percent of the parishes are
10 considered "rural", the healthcare of the citizens in those areas is dependant on good quality
11 hospital care available in local communities and ensuring the availability of that care was
12 the purpose of this landmark healthcare law in 1997; and

13 WHEREAS, following the passage of this legislation, the Rural Hospital Coalition
14 (RHC), Inc., a 501(c)(6) organization, was established and membership is open only to
15 hospitals of sixty beds or fewer and those serving parishes with a population of sixty-five
16 thousand or fewer residents; currently membership is at forty-eight hospitals; and

17 WHEREAS, in a time when electronic medical records are mandated, but expensive,
18 the RHC set up the Louisiana Rural Health Information Exchange (LARHIX) to implement
19 the statewide electronic medical records system; and

20 WHEREAS, from 2007 until very recently, Dr. Hines served as executive director
21 of LARHIX and he lent his time and talent to that organization, essential to protecting those
22 rural hospitals in the digital world; and

23 WHEREAS, Dr. Don Hines has tirelessly worked to improve healthcare in the rural
24 areas of Louisiana and his experience in that aspect of healthcare has been invaluable to
25 sustaining these hospitals and keeping them serving their rural populations; and

26 WHEREAS, when assessing the contributions to the good of society and especially
27 to patients in the rural areas of the state, it is impossible to overstate the impact former
28 Senator Don Hines, MD has had on the ability of the state of Louisiana to maintain the good
29 health of its citizens and a debt is owed to this quiet, but effective voice for preserving the
30 hospitals that are so vital in rural areas of the state.

