

2023 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 94

BY REPRESENTATIVE KNOX

CONDOLENCES: Expresses condolences on the death of Kenneth "Biggy" Johnston

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

2 To express the condolences of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the death of Kenneth
3 "Biggy" Johnston.

4 WHEREAS, it is with immense sadness and profound regret that the Legislature of
5 Louisiana has learned of the death of Kenneth "Biggy" Johnston; and

6 WHEREAS, Mr. Johnston was drafted to serve his country during the Vietnam War,
7 and upon his return to Louisiana, he and many of his fellow Vietnam veterans struggled with
8 post-traumatic stress disorder and substance addiction; and

9 WHEREAS, Biggy's addiction struggles continued until his incarceration at
10 Louisiana State Penitentiary in 1974; while incarcerated, he educated himself on the legal
11 and court systems with the goal of assisting individuals in navigating the court system with
12 various matters including filing petitions against nonunanimous jury convictions; and

13 WHEREAS, Biggy cofounded the Angola Special Civics Project with Norris
14 Henderson, and in 1990, the group worked with the Legislature of Louisiana to pass Act
15 No. 790, which created the first "lifer parole" law; and

16 WHEREAS, Biggy was released as a result of the project he helped start, and he
17 found employment as a paralegal in New Orleans; in 2003 the Angola Special Civics Project
18 was reconvened outside of prison, under the new moniker "Voice of the Experienced"
19 (VOTE), to organize, educate, and mobilize those impacted by the state's incarceration
20 policies; and

1 WHEREAS, more than a decade later, in 2016, Biggy was named the lead plaintiff
2 in *VOTE v. Louisiana*; the lawsuit sought to restore voting rights for tens of thousands of
3 Louisianians; and

4 WHEREAS, Biggy played an even more pivotal role in the passage of Act No. 636
5 of the 2018 Regular Session of the Legislature, which restored the voting rights to people
6 on probation and those on parole for over five years, including himself; and

7 WHEREAS, Biggy participated in the Non-Unanimous Jury Coalition, which helped
8 win the passage of an amendment to the state constitution ending the practice under which
9 he was convicted; he lived to see VOTE establish three chapters, massively increase its staff,
10 open multiple reentry house locations, play a pivotal role in criminal justice reform, receive
11 national recognition, launch the Formerly Incarcerated Transition Clinic, and purchase its
12 own facility; and

13 WHEREAS, Kenneth "Biggy" Johnston leaves to cherish his memory his VOTE
14 family, his peer support group, his loving siblings, and his children; he was a genuinely kind,
15 generous, and cheerful man who, despite his small stature, possessed more than enough heart
16 to justify his nickname; he will be deeply missed but certainly never forgotten.

17 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby
18 express heartfelt condolences on the death of Kenneth "Biggy" Johnston and does hereby
19 extend sincerest wishes that his family, friends, and loved ones find comfort in their shared
20 memories of his beautiful life.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

HCR 94 Original

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Knox

Expresses the condolences of the legislature on the death of Kenneth "Biggy" Johnston.