

2026 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 54

BY REPRESENTATIVE CHASSION

SPECIAL DAY/WEEK/MONTH: Honors the life of former Xavier University of Louisiana President Dr. Norman C. Francis and designates February 18, 2026, as Norman Francis Day at the state capitol

1 A RESOLUTION

2 To honor the life of former Xavier University of Louisiana President Dr. Norman C. Francis  
3 and designates February 18, 2026, as Norman Francis Day at the state capitol.

4 WHEREAS, Norman C. Francis was born in 1931 in Lafayette, Louisiana, and he  
5 moved to New Orleans to attend Xavier University of Louisiana; and

6 WHEREAS, while studying at Xavier, Dr. Francis was elected class president during  
7 each of his undergraduate years and student body president during his senior year; and

8 WHEREAS, after graduating in 1952, Dr. Francis enrolled in Loyola University  
9 School of Law, where he became the school's first African American graduate in 1955;  
10 shortly after earning a juris doctor, he received his draft order and enlisted in the United  
11 States Army; and

12 WHEREAS, Dr. Francis was hired by Xavier University in 1957 and served as dean  
13 of men, the first of his many roles with the educational institution; he served as an attorney  
14 litigating civil rights cases in Louisiana prior to *Brown v. Board of Education* and played a  
15 key role in the civil rights movement; and

16 WHEREAS, Dr. Francis was chosen to serve as the first lay president of Xavier  
17 University in 1968 at the age of thirty-seven; under his leadership, the university  
18 strengthened its Catholic and historically Black identity and expanded its national reputation,  
19 particularly in the sciences and health professions; and

1           WHEREAS, as president, Dr. Francis led Xavier University through a period of  
2 unparalleled growth, new partnerships, and prominence as one of the country's premier  
3 HBCUs; today, the university is recognized as a leading producer of Black graduates who  
4 go on to earn medical degrees; he retired in 2015, after forty-seven years of impactful  
5 service, and his presidency stands among the longest in U.S. higher education history; and

6           WHEREAS, Dr. Francis cofounded Liberty Bank and Trust Company, one of the  
7 oldest and largest Black-owned banks in the United States, to provide financial services to  
8 marginalized Black communities; he also helped the city of New Orleans acquire its first  
9 NFL franchise by investing in the New Orleans Saints and the development of the  
10 Superdome; and

11           WHEREAS, Dr. Francis was hailed as a monumental figure in philanthropy and  
12 education; he served as chair of the United Negro College Fund and held leadership roles  
13 on numerous corporate, foundation, and nonprofit boards; and

14           WHEREAS, Dr. Francis was a leading voice among Catholic higher education  
15 presidents and helped shape the conversation on the implications of the papal encyclical *Ex*  
16 *Corde Ecclesiae* and the role of Catholic identity in American higher education; he also  
17 founded the Institute for Black Catholic Studies; and

18           WHEREAS, Dr. Francis was a trusted civic leader who played a pivotal role in the  
19 rebuilding of New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina; his presence helped anchor the  
20 city's recovery with integrity, collaboration, and hope, and his work was an important factor  
21 in his receipt of the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President George W. Bush in 2006;  
22 and

23           WHEREAS, Dr. Francis deservedly received countless honors and accolades, but his  
24 most lasting legacy is found in the memory of his inspiring character, which was defined by  
25 quiet strength, deep faith, disciplined leadership, and steadfast belief in students; and

26           WHEREAS, Dr. Norman C. Francis led without spectacle and was guided by the  
27 unshakeable conviction that excellence and ethics are inseparable; he was a truly singular  
28 figure in Louisiana and American history, and his life is worthy of the highest recognition.

29           THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the  
30 Legislature of Louisiana does hereby honor the life of former Xavier University of Louisiana

- 1 President Dr. Norman C. Francis and does hereby designate February 18, 2026, as Norman
  - 2 Francis Day at the state capitol.
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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)]

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HR 54 Original

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