

2026 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 81

BY REPRESENTATIVE TAYLOR

A RESOLUTION

To commemorate the legacy of Louis Westerfield.

WHEREAS, it is with great pride that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana recognizes the inspiring life of the late Louis Westerfield and commemorates his outstanding legacy as a trailblazing lawyer, educator, and community leader; and

WHEREAS, Louis Westerfield was born on July 31, 1949, in DeKalb, Mississippi, to Louis Westerfield and Helen Clayborne Westerfield and was baptized at an early age at Mt. Sinai Baptist Church in DeKalb; and

WHEREAS, Louis spent his youth in rural Mississippi and New Orleans, Louisiana; he attended Kemper County Elementary School, Samuel J. Green Junior High School, and Walter L. Cohen Senior High School, and he graduated from L.B. Landry Senior High School; and

WHEREAS, Louis discovered a lifelong love of education when he enrolled at Southern University at New Orleans; he was active in educational pursuits, student government, and Phi Beta Sigma fraternity, and he graduated in 1971 with a bachelor of arts degree in political science; he carried a love for Southern and the opportunities he received there for the remainder of his life; and

WHEREAS, during his undergraduate studies, Louis met his future wife, Gelounder; they married in 1971 and raised three children: Anthony, Anika, and Anson; they were supportive and caring for each other, and they were immensely proud of their children; and

WHEREAS, Louis continued his education at the Southern University School of Law and later transferred to Loyola University School of Law in New Orleans, where he received a juris doctorate in 1974; while in law school, he served as an instructor of American government at Southern University at New Orleans; and

WHEREAS, upon graduating from law school, Louis worked as an assistant district attorney for the city of New Orleans; he also worked as a member of the board of arbitrators for the Longshoreman Union and the New Orleans Steamship Association; and

WHEREAS, although Louis was a talented prosecutor, he chose to return to school and begin a career as a law professor; in 1975, he accepted a position as an assistant professor of law and director of the Law Clinic at Southern University School of Law in Baton Rouge; and

WHEREAS, Louis moved his family back to New Orleans to enable him to teach at Loyola University School of Law, where he taught subjects ranging from criminal law to constitutional law, and became a tenured professor of law; while at Loyola, he was actively involved in many organizations, including the boards of the Urban League, New Orleans Legal Assistance Corporation, and Big Brothers; in 1977, the United States Jaycees named him the "Outstanding Young Man in America" in recognition of his accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, in 1979, Louis and his family moved to New York to allow him to pursue advanced legal studies at Columbia University School of Law, and in 1980, he received a master of law degree in constitutional and criminal law; and

WHEREAS, in 1983, Louis and his family moved to Mississippi, where he taught at the University of Mississippi School of Law and became the school's first tenured African American law professor; he remained dedicated to community service and chaired the Mississippi Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights from 1985 to 1986; and

WHEREAS, in 1986, Louis authored and published a legal textbook on the law of Louisiana evidence, and in 1991, he coauthored a second revised edition of the book; and

WHEREAS, Professor Westerfield became the dean of North Carolina Central University in June 1986, at the age of thirty-six; under his leadership, the school improved its library, bar passage rates, and faculty scholarships; while in North Carolina, he was actively involved with Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity; he served as dean for four years and developed a national reputation as a hard-working, friendly, and demanding leader; and

WHEREAS, in 1990, Dean Westerfield was named dean of Loyola University School of Law, making him the first African American dean in the school's history; over the course of his four-year tenure as dean, he oversaw a historic diversification of the school's

student body, faculty, and staff, and the school expanded services and raised record amounts of funds for endowed professorships, scholarships, and operations; and

WHEREAS, while at Loyola, Dean Westerfield was recruited to join the board of directors of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law in Washington, D.C.; in this role, he and other civil rights leaders met with President Bill Clinton at the White House to discuss national civil rights issues; and

WHEREAS, in 1992, Dean Westerfield received an honorary doctorate of laws from Southern University at New Orleans; at this time, he was active in numerous civic organizations, including the Bureau of Governmental Research, Greater New Orleans Foundation, World Trade Center, and Southern University at New Orleans Foundation; and

WHEREAS, during the summer of 1994, Dean Westerfield accepted an appointment from the Louisiana Supreme Court to serve as an appellate judge for the Second Circuit Court of Appeal; he was also presented with the prestigious A.P. Tureaud Black Citizenship Medal from the NAACP of Louisiana and received awards from the American Bar Association, the Louis A. Martinet Society, and Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity; and

WHEREAS, Dean Westerfield returned to Mississippi in July 1994 to serve as the dean and director of the University of Mississippi School of Law; he was the first African American to serve in this role, and his administration was distinguished through numerous notable achievements, including an increase in the school endowment by over one million dollars and a substantial increase in the Lamar Order endowment and membership; during his tenure, the number of minority students enrolled at the school doubled; and

WHEREAS, in 1995, Dean Westerfield was awarded an honorary doctorate of laws from Dillard University, and his accomplishments were featured in a profile published in *EBONY* magazine; in 1996, Tougaloo College presented him with an honorary doctorate of laws, and he was one of twenty-eight people in the United States who were profiled in Nestle Corporation's *Men of Courage*; and

WHEREAS, despite Dean Louis Westerfield's untimely passing on August 24, 1996, he forged an unforgettable legacy of dedication to excellence and service to family, education, scholarship, and community; he is among Louisiana's most cherished sons, and his forty-seven years of trailblazing achievements are worthy of the highest recognition.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commemorate the legacy of Louis Westerfield; does hereby recognize his trailblazing achievements in the legal profession; and does hereby extend enduring appreciation for his many contributions to the state of Louisiana and beyond.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES