

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 64

BY SENATOR BOUDREAUX

A RESOLUTION

To express sincere and heartfelt condolences on the passing of former Louisiana Medicaid Director Josephine Ruth Kennedy.

WHEREAS, it is with profound sorrow that the people of Louisiana have learned of the passing of Josephine Ruth Kennedy, who departed this life peacefully at her home on Friday, March 20, 2026, at the age of seventy-one; and

WHEREAS, Josephine Ruth Kennedy, lovingly known by all as Ruth Kennedy, was born on December 1, 1954, in Independence, Louisiana, and was raised in Springfield on her family's strawberry farm by her parents, Josephine and Walter Kennedy, in a close-knit family that instilled in her the values of faith, service, and hard work that would guide her throughout her life; and

WHEREAS, she graduated from Springfield High School in 1972, attended Oregon Bible College from 1972 to 1974, and continued her education at Southeastern Louisiana University from 1975 to 1979, preparing herself for a life of service to others; and

WHEREAS, Ruth Kennedy was a lifelong and devoted member of Blood River Church of God, where she faithfully shared her faith, taught others, and demonstrated compassion and generosity through her service to her church and community, touching countless lives through her kindness and encouragement; and

WHEREAS, she built an honorable and distinguished career spanning more than forty years in public service with the Louisiana Department of Health, dedicating herself to ensuring that families across Louisiana had access to essential health services and opportunities for care; and

WHEREAS, through her leadership, innovation, and determination, she helped lead major initiatives to expand health coverage and improve care delivery across the state, including the implementation and expansion of the Louisiana Children's Health Insurance Program (LaCHIP) and the development of Bayou Health, and was known for personally

traveling throughout the state to assist families in obtaining health coverage; and

WHEREAS, Ruth Kennedy was promoted to serve as Louisiana Medicaid Director, where she oversaw a program that supported more than one million Louisianans and guided efforts to expand coverage to an additional four hundred thousand working adults who otherwise had limited access to health care; and

WHEREAS, her tireless dedication and expertise earned her widespread respect from colleagues, policymakers, and healthcare providers across Louisiana and throughout the nation, and in recognition of her exemplary service to the citizens of Louisiana, she was honored with the prestigious "Dunbar Award" in 2015, the highest honor bestowed upon classified state employees; and

WHEREAS, after retiring from state government in 2017, Ruth Kennedy continued her work to improve health care access and policy by joining Southern Strategy Group, where she assisted providers and pharmacies, helped streamline eligibility verification programs, supported hospital systems, and worked to expand opportunities for care and professional training for pharmacy technicians across the state and beyond; and

WHEREAS, throughout her life, Ruth Kennedy was known as a pioneer who was fearless, resourceful, and deeply compassionate, guided by her unwavering faith and commitment to helping individuals and families who otherwise would have gone without needed care; and

WHEREAS, Ruth Kennedy is survived by her sisters, Betty Gay Rena and Regina McCord; her brother, Joseph Kennedy and his wife, Sharon; her sister-in-law, Loretta Kennedy; her special cousin, Sharon Irby Derbins; her special niece, Kay Kinchen; and many loving nieces and nephews; and

WHEREAS, she was preceded in death by her parents, Josephine and Walter Kennedy; her siblings, Juanita Kennedy Kinchen and Curtis Kennedy; and her brothers-in-law, Willie Kinchen and Woody Rena; and

WHEREAS, Ruth Kennedy will be remembered for her unwavering faith, her servant's heart, and her lifelong dedication to improving the lives of others, and her legacy of compassion, leadership, and public service will continue to inspire generations of Louisianans.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby express its sincere and heartfelt condolences on the passing of former Louisiana Medicaid Director Josephine Ruth Kennedy and does hereby recognize and honor her remarkable career of public service and her enduring contributions to the health and welfare of the people of Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the family of Josephine Ruth Kennedy and to the Louisiana Department of Health as an expression of the Senate's deepest sympathy and respect.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE