

2026 Regular Session

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 83

BY SENATOR EDMONDS

CONDOLENCES. Expresses sincere condolences upon the passing of Josephine Ruth Kennedy, former Medicaid Director of the Louisiana Department of Health.

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

2 To express the sincere condolences of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the passing of  
3 Josephine Ruth Kennedy, former Medicaid Director of the Louisiana Department of  
4 Health.

5 WHEREAS, the Legislature of Louisiana greatly honors and commemorates the life  
6 of Josephine Ruth Kennedy, a trailblazer and extraordinary public servant, who at the age  
7 of seventy-one passed away on March 20, 2026; and

8 WHEREAS, Josephine Ruth Kennedy, known as Ruth Kennedy, was born on  
9 December 1, 1954, in Independence, Louisiana, to Josephine and Walter Kennedy and raised  
10 on a strawberry field in Springfield with her five siblings; and

11 WHEREAS, she graduated from Springfield High School in 1972, attended Oregon  
12 Bible College from 1972 to 1974, and upon returning home she continued her education at  
13 Southeastern Louisiana University from 1975 to 1979; and

14 WHEREAS, Ruth Kennedy built an honorable and distinguished career for forty  
15 years in public service with the Louisiana Department of Health, dedicating herself to  
16 helping families access essential services by leading major initiatives to expand coverage  
17 and improve care delivery; and

18 WHEREAS, Ruth Kennedy leaves behind a legacy that is foundational to Louisiana's

1 Department of Health and its citizens; and

2 WHEREAS, Ruth, described as the "Implementer-in-Chief", used her business sense,  
3 smarts, and strategic abilities to take plans and policies and turn them into reliable protocol  
4 that really worked, often expanding healthcare coverage to thousands and improving  
5 healthcare delivery services; and

6 WHEREAS, Ruth played a prominent role in establishing new initiatives, including  
7 LaCHIP, the Children's Health Insurance Program, Bayou Health, and Express Lane  
8 Eligibility which resulted in more than ten thousand Louisiana children being enrolled in  
9 coverage literally overnight; and

10 WHEREAS, Ruth oversaw a program serving more than one million residents and  
11 later led to her crowning achievement: the implementation of Louisiana's Medicaid  
12 expansion program which resulted in the enrollment of more than four hundred thousand  
13 working adults in ten months who otherwise would have faced limited access to health care;  
14 and

15 WHEREAS, Ruth's leadership strengthened our state's healthcare system and  
16 positioned Louisiana as a model for innovation and access nationwide, while also advancing  
17 streamlined-eligibility verification programs and hospital systems in Texas and elsewhere,  
18 resulting in expanded opportunities for health care; and

19 WHEREAS, Ruth, as a trusted and treasured resource for policymakers and providers  
20 across this country, received from her peers, the Dunbar Award in 2015, the highest honor  
21 a classified state employee can receive, and was also recognized in Washington D.C. and by  
22 the Legislature of Louisiana through resolutions and official documents; and

23 WHEREAS, Ruth helped manage programs throughout the state to certify certain  
24 that Medicaid rolls were accurate and updated and that re-enrolled providers in state  
25 programs were valid; and

26 WHEREAS, Ruth also set up an accredited continuing education program for  
27 pharmacists and pharmacy technicians as well as a training program which worked to build  
28 a larger base of certified pharmacy technicians statewide; and

29 WHEREAS, Ruth is survived by her sisters, Betty Gay Rena and Regina McCord;  
30 her brother, Joseph Kennedy (Sharon); sister-in-law, Loretta Kennedy; special cousin Sharon

