

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 83

BY SENATOR EDMONDS

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, Ruth Kennedy leaves behind a legacy that is foundational to Louisiana's Department of Health and its citizens; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, Ruth is survived by her sisters, Betty Gay Rena and Regina McCord; her brother, Joseph Kennedy (Sharon); sister-in-law, Loretta Kennedy; special cousin Sharon Irby Derbins; special niece Kay Kinchen; and many loving nieces and nephews; with special thanks and appreciation to Lena McCarter for all the care and assistance she rendered throughout the years; and

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

WHEREAS, Ruth was a lifelong and influential member of Blood River Church of God where she faithfully served by teaching and sharing her faith to help shape and inspire the lives of those in her community; and

WHEREAS, Josephine Ruth Kennedy will be remembered for her unwavering faith, servant's heart, and her lifelong dedication to helping others along with her legacy of compassion, leadership, and devotion to her family, faith, and community which will continue to inspire all who were blessed to know her.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby honor and commemorate the life of Josephine Ruth Kennedy, former Medicaid Director of the Louisiana Department of Health.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the Kennedy family.

---

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

---

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES