Regular Session, 2013

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 37

BY REPRESENTATIVES KATRINA JACKSON, BADON, BARROW, WESLEY BISHOP, BROSSETT, BURRELL, COX, DIXON, FRANKLIN, GAINES, HONORE, HUNTER, GIROD JACKSON, JAMES, JEFFERSON, TERRY LANDRY, NORTON, PIERRE, PRICE, SMITH, THIERRY, ALFRED WILLIAMS, AND PATRICK WILLIAMS AND SENATORS BROOME, BROWN, DORSEY-COLOMB, GALLOT, GUILLORY, MORRELL, MURRAY, PETERSON, AND TARVER

COMMENDATIONS: Commends the Honorable Bernette J. Johnson, Chief Justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To commend the Honorable Bernette J. Johnson on becoming the first African American woman to serve as Chief Justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court.

WHEREAS, Justice Bernette J. Johnson received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, and later received an Honorary Doctorate in Law from Spelman in April, 2001; and

WHEREAS, Justice Johnson was one of the first African American women to attend the law school at Louisiana State University (LSU), where she received her Juris Doctorate degree in 1969; and

WHEREAS, while in law school, Justice Johnson worked summers for the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) and as a law clerk for the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., handling cases filed by the department to implement the 1964 Civil Rights Act; and

WHEREAS, Justice Johnson also served as a federal observer during elections in Greenwood, Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, after receiving her Juris Doctorate degree, Justice Johnson became the managing attorney with the New Orleans Legal Assistance Corporation, where she delivered legal services to more than three thousand clients in socioeconomically deprived neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, prior to her election to the bench, Justice Johnson spent much of her legal career working in the public sector as a legal services attorney, a Deputy City Attorney for the city of New Orleans, and as a law clerk with the U.S. Justice Department, Civil Rights Division; and

WHEREAS, Justice Johnson also worked as a community organizer with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Legal Defense and Educational Fund in New York City and with community groups in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Louisiana, disseminating information about recent school desegregation decisions and encouraging parents to take advantage of newly desegregated schools; and

WHEREAS, Justice Johnson also helped to organize household workers so they would receive social security benefits and a minimum wage; and

WHEREAS, Justice Johnson's judicial career began in 1984, when she was elected to the Civil District Court of New Orleans as the first woman to hold that office, and she was re-elected without opposition in 1990 before being elected Chief Judge by her colleagues in 1994; and

WHEREAS, as a civil trial judge, Justice Johnson was first assigned to Domestic Relations Court, where she established a system to refer custody, alimony, and child support issues to mediation prior to court appearances and provided that such mediation be provided to needy families based on a sliding scale system for payment of fees; and

WHEREAS, Justice Johnson was elected to serve on the Louisiana Supreme Court in 1994 and was re-elected without opposition in 2000; and

WHEREAS, Justice Johnson serves on the Louisiana Supreme Court's Judicial Council, has served on the Court's Legal Services Task Force, has served on the National Campaign on Best Practices in the area of Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Court, and has worked closely with the Court's Mandatory Continuing Legal Education Committee and the Committee on Bar Admissions; and

WHEREAS, Justice Johnson provided extraordinary leadership to the Louisiana Judiciary in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina by facilitating the efforts to restore the operations of all courts in the New Orleans area; and

WHEREAS, during her tenure on the Louisiana Supreme Court, Justice Johnson has diversified the Committee on Bar Admissions by increasing minority participation and leadership on that committee; and

WHEREAS, Justice Johnson organized the first Continuing Legal Education (CLE) program for the Louis A. Martinet Legal Society, was chair of the CLE Committee, and was given the Martinet's President Award in 1997 and 2008; and

WHEREAS, Justice Johnson is a Fleur De Lis member of the New Orleans Bar Association, is active with several committees of the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA), and was presented with the LSBA President's award in 2005 for her work as cochair of the Diversity Committee; and

WHEREAS, in 1998, Justice Johnson chaired the National Bar Association Judicial Council, also serving a term as secretary, and is currently a member of the A.P. Tureaud Inns of Court, the Louisiana State Law Institute, and the National Association of Women Judges, serving as a district director, and is active with the Women in Prison Project; and

WHEREAS, in 1996, Justice Johnson's portrait was unveiled as she was inducted into the LSU Law Center Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, Justice Johnson is the proud parent of two industrious and conscientious adult children: David, an accountant who lives in Atlanta with his family, and Rachael, who is an attorney licensed to practice law in Florida and Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, Justice Johnson merits a special measure of commendation for the tremendous pride and honor that she brings to the state of Louisiana.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend the Honorable Bernette J. Johnson on becoming the first African American woman to serve as Chief Justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court, does hereby record for posterity her noteworthy ascension in the legal field and her outstanding contributions to both the legal profession and her fellow citizens, and extends to her best wishes for continued success and happiness in all future endeavors.

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)]

Katrina Jackson HCR No. 37

Commends the Hon. Bernette J. Johnson on becoming the first African American woman to serve as Chief Justice of the La. Supreme Court.