

2016 Regular Session

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 64

BY SENATORS PEACOCK AND TARVER

CONDOLENCES. Expresses sincere condolences upon the passing of Joe R. Wills.

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

2 To express the sincere condolences of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the passing of
3 community activist Joe Robert Wills of Shreveport, Louisiana, a stalwart veteran of
4 the Modern Civil Rights Movement.

5 WHEREAS, it is with heavy hearts that the Legislature of Louisiana has learned of
6 the death of Joe R. Wills, an exceptional man of the people, who "made a difference" as a
7 political action organizer; and

8 WHEREAS, it is a privilege to honor the memory of Joe. R. Wills whose life was
9 dedicated to the betterment of all mankind by his exceptional contributions as a civic leader
10 who served as vice president of the Shreveport Chapter of the National Association for the
11 Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), as a charter member and president of Black
12 United for Lasting Leadership, Inc., and as president of the Eastside Brotherhood
13 Association; and

14 WHEREAS, Joe R. Wills was an extraordinary individual of profound moral
15 character, a self-taught scholar, and a pioneer for the cause that he knew to be just and
16 righteous – the concept that all human beings were to be afforded equal protection before
17 the law; and

18 WHEREAS, he was, first and foremost, a servant of God and a member and deacon

1 of the St. Peter Baptist Church; his Christian faith gave him strength of purpose to remain
2 steadfast in his beliefs and to help others; and

3 WHEREAS, as an advocate for change in the early days of the Civil Rights
4 Movement, Joe Wills would not be deterred by threats of bodily harm as he went
5 door-to-door encouraging others to exercise their constitutional right to register and vote;
6 and

7 WHEREAS, Joe R. Wills brought about change in local government in its voter
8 redistricting measures, neighborhood improvements, and by supporting public recognition
9 of well-respected educators and community leaders; and

10 WHEREAS, he was born of humble beginnings and reared in the community of
11 Stoner Hill where he was affectionately known as "the mayor"; and

12 WHEREAS, he graduated from Booker T. Washington High School in 1963 at the
13 beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement and remained involved in political activism; and

14 WHEREAS, as a employee of AT&T and Avaya Technologies, Joe Wills retired
15 after thirty-two years of service, and, during his employment participated in the negotiations
16 of the Communications Workers of America union and served on its executive board; and

17 WHEREAS, after retirement Joe kept busy within his neighborhood, helping out at
18 church, offering sage advice, and showing concern for his fellow man; and

19 WHEREAS, Joe R. Wills was married for fifty-two years to his wife Shirley, and
20 together they made a Christian home built on God's love, and their union was blessed with
21 precious children, grandchildren, extended family and faithful friends; and

22 WHEREAS, Joe R. Wills shall long be remembered for his legacy of activism in
23 defiance of long-standing customs that suppressed minorities in either the availability of or
24 access to opportunities and services, and for his tireless advocacy to defeat racial
25 discrimination; and

26 WHEREAS, Joe R. Wills was a pillar of the community, an eloquent, charming man
27 filled with great kindness; and

28 WHEREAS, Joe Robert Wills remains an inspirational figure; his support of "making
29 a difference" resonates within the hearts and minds of all who seek a positive change for the
30 disenfranchised; and

1 WHEREAS, on March 11, 2016, Joe R. Wills found his place in the firmament with
2 his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and transitioned to his heavenly home to be with all the
3 great civil rights activists who have gone before him, both well-known and unknown.

4 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby
5 express heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Joe Robert Wills, an extraordinary
6 community leader.

7 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby
8 recognize the lifetime of devotion to racial equality that Joe R. Wills wrought; for he made
9 the world a more humane and compassionate place in which to live and his devotion to the
10 rights of all men reminds us of how far we all have come.

11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to his
12 widow, Mrs. Shirley Wills.

The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part
of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Susan P. Montague.

	DIGEST	
SCR 64 Original	2016 Regular Session	Peacock
Expresses condolences upon the passing of Joe R. Wills of Shreveport.		