SLS 18RS-1081 ORIGINAL

2018 Regular Session

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 32

BY SENATOR ALARIO

CONDOLENCES. Expresses sincere and heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Thomas Milton "Tom" Benson on the occasion of his passing.

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 1 2 To express the sincere condolences of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the passing of New Orleans businessman, philanthropist, and Louisiana legend, Thomas Milton "Tom" 3 Benson, at the age of ninety and to note his lifetime of accomplishment. 4 5 WHEREAS, it is with great remorse that the Legislature of Louisiana and its people have learned of the passing of Tom Benson; an extraordinary gentleman and phenomenal 6 7 businessman who experienced rags-to-riches success in life, who expressed gratitude for his 8 good fortune by his participation in all manner of civic, social, and religious causes, and who 9 always faced the world with a smile; and WHEREAS, known as "Mr. B" and "Mr. New Orleans", Tom Benson had a 10 11 larger-than-life public persona who acted as a goodwill ambassador for the city he loved, yet he was centered and down to earth in his private life; and 12 13 WHEREAS, a native son born in 1927 in the Seventh Ward, Tom was a child of the 14 Depression and he quickly learned the value of hard work; and WHEREAS, his work ethic reaped great success that culminated in a net worth 15 16 estimated in the billions of dollars; Mr. Benson was the richest person in Louisiana and 17 Forbes Magazine ranked his financial empire as 288th on its list of the 400 wealthiest 18 Americans; and his empire began with a paper route while in grade school; and

1	WHEREAS, along with his prodigious work ethic, Tom Benson was a man of vision
2	and creativity; he grasped the mechanics of finance, marketing, and demand, but he also had
3	the keen ability to recognize the economic potential in lucrative situations; and
4	WHEREAS, he graduated from St. Aloysius, later known as Brother Martin High
5	School, and from Loyola University with a degree in business administration; and
6	WHEREAS, his studies at Loyola were interrupted by his enlistment in the United
7	States Navy during World War II, when he was assigned as a seaman aboard the USS South
8	Dakota then honorably discharged at the conclusion of the conflict; and
9	WHEREAS, after graduation, he worked as an accountant to support his family, and
10	in 1948 went to work as a bookkeeper at Cathey Chevrolet, the nexus of what would become
11	his ownership of thirty-three car dealerships in Louisiana and Texas; and
12	WHEREAS, his astute business acumen expanded his holdings such as commercial
13	real estate and the banking industry to form Benson Financial World and other venues; and
14	WHEREAS, in 1985, Mr. Benson purchased the New Orleans Saints football
15	franchise; he made coaching and managerial changes that breathed new life into the team
16	which led to its first winning season and playoff appearance in 1987, then winning the NFL
17	XLIV Super Bowl (44th) on February 7, 2010, along with the special elation of being played
18	on home turf in the Superdome; and the city of New Orleans has hosted five Super Bowls;
19	and
20	WHEREAS, Saints football became his passion in later life and he kept an office at
21	the training facility; Benson could be found viewing practice sessions from his golf cart; and
22	WHEREAS, Tom Benson was delighted to be inducted into the Louisiana Sports
23	Hall of Fame in 2014 and a statue of his likeness holding up the Vince Lombardi Trophy
24	stands on the plaza outside the Superdome; and
25	WHEREAS, Mr. Benson later purchased the NBA New Orleans Hornets basketball
26	franchise in 2012, then changed its name to The Pelicans; ownership of both the Saints and
27	Pelicans made Benson the only individual to own two major professional sports franchises
28	in the same locale; and
29	WHEREAS, Tom Benson was the grateful recipient of a plethora of awards of every
30	stripe for entrepreneurial, cultural, and philanthropic activities; he had a tenderness in his

WHEREAS, along with his prodigious work ethic, Tom Benson was a man of vision

heart for those in need and without opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the establishment of the Gayle and Tom Benson Charitable Foundation provided endowments in benevolent endeavors; numerous public and nonprofit agencies benefitted from his generosity including local institutions of higher learning such as Loyola and Tulane universities, Ochsner medical center cancer research, New Orleans Museum of Art, the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, the Audubon Nature Institute, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Southeast Louisiana, and numerous other charities benefitted from anonymous donations; and

WHEREAS, in acknowledgment of his generosity, Tom Benson was honored by the inclusion of his name associated with those entities he helped to develop or support, which include Notre Dame Seminary, Yulman Stadium at Tulane, the Tom Benson Jesuit Center

at Loyola, Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium at the Pro Football Hall of Fame, the Science and Technology complex at St. Mary's Dominican High School, Team Gleason House (ALS advocacy), and in San Antonio, Texas, the School of Technology at Oblate School of Theology, the University of the Incarnate Word, and Central Catholic High School; and

WHEREAS, as a man of unfaltering faith, Tom Benson contributed to the support of many Roman Catholic entities and made extensive donations to educational institutions and charitable endeavors; and Tom and Gayle Benson were the recipients of the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice medal from Pope Benedict XVI for their outstanding service to the Catholic Church, the highest papal honor bestowed to a Catholic layperson; and

WHEREAS, Tom Benson loved New Orleans and its rich culture and history; he assisted in its rebuilding after Hurricane Katrina with investment in many worthwhile businesses; he bought a majority stake in the Dixie Brewing Company to revive the product and bring it back into production; and

WHEREAS, he was a Mardi Gras reveler without par, who celebrated the carnival season with great enthusiasm, and after Saints home victories in the Superdome, sporting a black and gold parasol, he sashayed down the football field to the music of "When the Saints Go Marching In" with a strut known as the "Benson Boogie"; and

WHEREAS, the people of the city of New Orleans expressed their high praise of Tom Benson in many ways, however, a touching tribute to him at the announcement of his SLS 18RS-1081 **ORIGINAL** SCR NO. 32

1	passing was expressed in a "Second Line" impromptu parade of musicians, singers, and
2	dancers who marched in reverence and celebration of his life through the French Quarter
3	from Treme to the Superdome to the foot of his statute; and
4	WHEREAS, like "The Big Easy", Tom Benson worked hard and played hard, too;
5	a quote from Tom Benson reads, "Tough times never last; but tough people do. Make no
6	mistake, I will be back in the office tomorrow morning working hard, as I do every day";
7	that was the mantra of Tom Benson that lasted nearly a century; and
8	WHEREAS, Tom Benson made his fortune in football and finance; he was an
9	extraordinarily tough and savvy businessman, an entrepreneur of the highest order; and he
10	has left an indelible mark on the city of New Orleans and on the state, and whether the
11	economic times were "boom or bust", he enjoyed every day and made the best of it going
12	forward; and
13	WHEREAS, in nine decades of living, Tom Benson experienced unrivaled success;
14	and like any man, he had his share of failure, contention, personal loss, and consolation; but
15	no matter what the circumstance, Tom Benson and his wife, Gayle, always faced the world
16	together, unafraid, and with a smile.
17	THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby
18	express the sincere condolences upon the passing of Thomas Milton "Tom" Benson, New
19	Orleans businessman, philanthropist, and Louisiana legend.
20	BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby note
21	that a man of his stature, depth, and generosity shall not soon pass this way again.
22	BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to his
23	widow, Mrs. Gayle L. Benson.

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

DIGEST 2018 Regular Session

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Expresses condolences upon the death of New Orleans businessman Tom Benson.

SCR 32 Original