

2021 Regular Session

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 77

BY SENATOR FOIL

CONDOLENCES. Expresses condolences upon the death of James H. (Jim) Wharton, former LSU chancellor.

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A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To express the sincere condolences of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the passing of James H. (Jim) Wharton, PhD, former chancellor of Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge and to recognize his lifetime of achievements.

WHEREAS, it is with deep regret and profound sorrow that the members of the Legislature of Louisiana have learned of the passing of James H. (Jim) Wharton, on May 22, 2021, at age eighty-three; and

WHEREAS, Jim was born to John Henry and Faye Walling Wharton on July 23, 1937, just outside of Mangum, Oklahoma, and married Joan McPherson on November 23, 1956, in West Monroe, Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, he earned his PhD in chemical physics from LSU in 1962 and served as an assistant professor of chemistry for the remainder of the year; and

WHEREAS, Jim served in the United States Army Ordinance Corps from 1963 to 1965 where he was assigned to the Marshall Space Flight Center to work on the Saturn V moon landing program for NASA; and

WHEREAS, at Dean A.R. Choppin's request, he returned to LSU in 1965 as an Assistant Professor and was promoted to Associate Dean of the College of Chemistry and Physics in 1968; and

1           WHEREAS, Jim was named Dean of the Junior Division in 1971 where he  
2 automated student records for the first time in LSU history; and

3           WHEREAS, in 1974, Chancellor Paul Murrill promoted Jim to Dean of the General  
4 College where he had twelve thousand students and was responsible for The Junior Division,  
5 University College, The Admissions Office, The Registrars Office, Student Aid, and High  
6 School Relations; and

7           WHEREAS, in 1979, the LSU Board of Supervisors sent Dr. Wharton to serve as  
8 Chancellor of LSU in Alexandria during a difficult period in the history of that campus; and

9           WHEREAS, Jim was chosen by the LSU Board of Supervisors to be Chancellor of  
10 Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College in 1981 and served until  
11 1989; and

12           WHEREAS, Dr. Wharton taught Chemistry from 1990 through May 2008 when he  
13 fully retired from the university; and

14           WHEREAS, during his eight-year tenure as LSU's third Chancellor, he steered the  
15 state's flagship institution of higher learning to unprecedented progress while guiding the  
16 institution through one of its most difficult financial periods and, through much adversity,  
17 he made major improvements in the quality of the university's faculty and students, its  
18 academic standards, its private fundraising programs, and its research effort, while  
19 contending with continual state budget cuts; and

20           WHEREAS, in 1982, he pushed to create the Louisiana Endowment Trust Fund for  
21 Eminent Scholars which became a reality in 1983 and was the forerunner of today's support  
22 program for faculty chairs and professorships; and

23           WHEREAS, LSU's first admission standards were approved in 1984 for  
24 implementation in 1988, the ACT score improved for entering freshman students, and the  
25 graduation rate improved from thirty-three percent to forty-seven percent; and

26           WHEREAS, the hallmark of his administration was the Quality Trust Program,  
27 designed to upgrade instruction and research and to maintain LSU's statewide "flagship"  
28 status as Louisiana's premier comprehensive university; and

29           WHEREAS, Dr. Wharton was also responsible for reorganizing and streamlining the  
30 university's internal administration and succeeded in bringing peak efficiency to LSU

1 operations which boasted the lowest per student overhead cost of any comparable national  
2 institution; and

3 WHEREAS, funding from outside grants from state, federal, and private sources  
4 increased dramatically and LSU's research grants went from \$17 million to more than \$50  
5 million per year and funds from private gifts also increased significantly; and

6 WHEREAS, in 1987, the Carnegie Foundation designated LSU as a "Research  
7 University I", the highest advanced-research ranking given by the foundation which put LSU  
8 in a group of forty-five public and twenty-five private universities; and

9 WHEREAS, the LSU Foundation was converted from a system foundation to a  
10 private foundation and its assets increased from \$7 million in 1981 to \$45 million in 1989;  
11 private funds on deposit with the university increased from \$2 million to \$12 million; and  
12 great progress was made toward building a strong and very active LSU Alumni Association;  
13 and

14 WHEREAS, the bylaws and articles of incorporation for Tiger Athletic Foundation  
15 (TAF) were written and the organization undertook the first major improvement of athletic  
16 facilities with private funds; and

17 WHEREAS, an office of technology transfer which has brought in more than \$10  
18 million was created and, near the end of his term as chancellor, Jim raised \$8.5 million in  
19 private funds toward the purchase of a \$17 million supercomputer that had a significant  
20 impact on the future of the university; and

21 WHEREAS, after serving as chancellor he remained as a fund raiser and highly  
22 regarded teacher, continuing a long tradition of volunteer service to the state and LSU; and

23 WHEREAS, he served as chairman of the committee which oversaw the  
24 implementation of federal and state laws providing for the appropriate education of all  
25 handicapped children; he handled the political, economic, and contractual issues required  
26 to bring the LASER Interferometer Gravity-Wave Observatory to Louisiana, which later  
27 proved, and fulfilled the last prediction of Einstein's general theory of relativity; and

28 WHEREAS, Jim served as chair of the scientific team advising the state on the  
29 proper disposal of oilfield wastes, chair of the advisory committee on 8-G expenditures for  
30 the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, chair of the capital construction

1 committee for renovations and additions to the University Laboratory School, and consultant  
2 to the state on desegregation; and

3 WHEREAS, he worked with Patrick Taylor as a volunteer on the TOPS program,  
4 later served as a consultant to Mr. Taylor on access to higher education, and after Mr.  
5 Taylor's death, he continued his service as a consultant to Mrs. Taylor while a board member  
6 of the Patrick F. Taylor Foundation; and

7 WHEREAS, Dr. Wharton served as a higher education consultant to the state of  
8 Mississippi and to the University of Alabama System; and

9 WHEREAS, he was named the LSU Alumnus of the year for 2005 and received  
10 commendations for his service to the state and the university from the Louisiana Senate, the  
11 Louisiana House of Representatives and in a proclamation by the governor; and

12 WHEREAS, he was preceded in death by his sister, Margaret Caffey, and his parents;  
13 and

14 WHEREAS, he is survived by his wife of sixty-four years, Joan McPherson  
15 Wharton; two children, Sherri Wharton Hadskey and John Scott Wharton and his wife  
16 Bridget; five grandsons, Beau (Ashby) and Alex Hadskey and Jake (Camille), Sam and Will  
17 Wharton; two sisters, Kathryn Wharton and Nancy Drummond; and one brother, Sam  
18 Wharton; and

19 WHEREAS, Jim Wharton was a generous man possessing an abundance of interests  
20 and skills, whose intellect and leadership brought tremendous success to the LSU system,  
21 whose positive effects on the university are still prevalent, and whose memory shall remain  
22 one of humility, humanity, and compassion.

23 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby  
24 express sincere condolences upon the passing of James H. (Jim) Wharton PhD, the third  
25 chancellor of Louisiana State University.

26 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to his  
27 widow, Joan McPherson Wharton.

The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Jerry J. Guillot.

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