

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 15

BY SENATORS PRESSLY AND JENKINS

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To commend and congratulate C.E. Byrd High School in Shreveport, Louisiana, as it celebrates its centennial year.

WHEREAS, a Virginia native and lawyer who left the bar for a profession in education, Clifton Ellis Byrd, traveled to accept a principalship in Monroe, Louisiana in 1889 but left that position in 1892 to become principal of the first public high school in Shreveport, Louisiana, and assisted in the establishment of the Caddo Parish School Board; and

WHEREAS, after a one year interruption to accept the presidency at Louisiana Tech University, then known as Louisiana Industrial Institute, "Professor Byrd" returned in 1907 to become Superintendent of the Caddo Parish Public School System until his passing in 1926; and

WHEREAS, in 1923 the Caddo Parish School Board purchased a twenty-acre cow pasture two miles south of Shreveport from James Gras for \$110,000 with additional lots for \$9,500 to build a new high school awarding a \$772,133 contract to the Stewart-McGee Construction Company to replace the closed Hope Street School with a new facility in honor of Superintendent and Professor Clifton Ellis "Cliff" Byrd to be named C.E. Byrd High School; and

WHEREAS, on October 25, 1925, Principal Grover C. Koffman opened Shreveport's newest high school in a dedication ceremony held in the 2,000 seat auditorium; and

WHEREAS, for the next fifty years under the leadership and guidance of Principal Koffman and Principal J. H. Duncan, Byrd High School, during its "golden era of pristine glory", became a nationally recognized model for classical academic education and superior athletic achievement led by an extraordinary staff of faculty and coaches; and

WHEREAS, the legacy of Principals Koffman and Duncan continued through the years under the guidance of former Caddo Parish School Board member and president, state representative, and state senator Principal Dr. B. L. "Buddy" Shaw; interim Principal Jewell Wagner; Principal R. Lynne Fitzgerald; Principal Richard L. Lavergne; continuing to this day under the stewardship of Principal Gerald "Jerry" Badgley; and

WHEREAS, over the years Byrd High School experienced the national cultural trends and struggles confronting most urban areas, including "crossover day" in the spring of 1970 when the black Valencia High School merged with the white C. E. Byrd and the tumultuous years leading to the announcement on May 23, 1982, that due to the prohibitive cost to repair a declining building, decrease in enrollment to less than 800 students, and lack of community confidence in its academic standards, C. E. Byrd High School would close the next year; and

WHEREAS, committed to a plan to move Caddo Magnet High School, the Caddo Parish School Board responding to community and student efforts seeking a reprieve, the Board approved a multi-million dollar electrical and mechanical renovation, with skeptical approval for the opening of a C. E. Byrd Math Science Magnet Program; and

WHEREAS, in the fall of 1984, with fewer than 800 neighborhood students and 52 students in the new Math Science Magnet Program, Principal B. L. Shaw hired two exceptional teachers, long time Byrd administrator and graduate, Jerry Malone, a counselor and a secretary to implement the program as well as R. Lynne Fitzgerald from Magnet High School to guide the neighborhood program; and

WHEREAS, unwilling to let closure become a reality, the loyal alumni of Byrd, a determined contingent, many of whom were alumni and an exceptional student body, staff and faculty, went to work to "save" Byrd; and

WHEREAS, during the next seventeen years, Byrd began a remarkable "Byrd is Back" story that included building the largest group of high school alumni in the country;

creating the world's largest JROTC program; hosting the largest high school "Ultimate Reunion" attended by 6,000 graduates and families; generating the second largest enrollment of a Louisiana high school; and bringing back winning athletic tradition of state championships and competitive academic championships excellence; and

WHEREAS, on the eve of the Second Ultimate Reunion in February, 1997, only fifteen years after the board proposed to close Byrd, Byrd graduate and Principal, R. Lynne Fitzgerald, stood in the White House Rose Garden proudly representing the thousands who loved and worked tirelessly for Byrd's "comeback" to hear the name of C. E. Byrd High School called as one of the 100 public high schools in the United States to be recognized as a "National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence". Byrd Was Back!; and

WHEREAS, Principal Jerry Badgley has played a pivotal role in the growth and transformation of Byrd High School fostering significant advancements in school curriculum as a result of his leadership and guidance, including a new football practice field and enhanced facilities; and

WHEREAS, Principal Badgley's efforts have highlighted the impact of school leaders in the community, whose alumni include current state senators, Thomas A. Pressly and Sam L. Jenkins Jr.; former state legislators including Senator Virginia Kilpatrick Shehee; Senator Phil Short; Senator and Judge Robert Kostelka; former state representatives Art Sour, Frank Fulco, and James C. Gardner; United States Senator J. Bennett Johnston Jr.; Saxby Chambliss, United States Senator from Georgia; John Howard Dalton, former United States Secretary of the Navy; Brandon Friedman, former deputy assistant secretary of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development; Tom Jarriel, ABC News journalist; and many other outstanding public servants including United States District Judge Tom Stagg, United States Circuit Court Judge, Jacques L. Wiener Jr., and Louisiana Supreme Court Justices, Jeffrey P. Victory and Pike Hall Jr.; and

WHEREAS, in 1991 the eight-acre area comprising the school buildings and other structures were added to the National Register of Historic Places, recognizing one of the few examples of Jacobean Revival architecture; and

WHEREAS, C.E. Byrd High School will celebrate its 100th graduating class, June 5th through 7th, 2025, culminating the "Ultimate Reunion" on June 7th.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend and congratulate the faculty, staff, students, and alumni of C.E. Byrd High School as they celebrate the school's centennial year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to C.E. Byrd High School Principal, Gerald "Jerry" Badgley.

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES