

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 10

BY SENATORS DUPLESSIS, BARROW, BASS, BOUDREAUX, HENRY, KLEINPETER, LUNEAU, MILLER, MIZELL, MORRIS, MYERS, PRESSLY, PRICE, REESE, SELDERS, WHEAT AND WOMACK AND REPRESENTATIVES BOYD, BRASS, BRYANT, CARPENTER, WILFORD CARTER, CHASSION, FISHER, GREEN, JACKSON, TRAVIS JOHNSON, JORDAN, KNOX, LAFLEUR, TERRY LANDRY, LARVADAIN, LYONS, MARCELLE, MENA, MILLER, MOORE, MURRAY, NEWELL, PHELPS, TAYLOR, WALTERS AND YOUNG

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To express the sincere condolences of the Legislature of Louisiana to the family of Dr. Norman Christopher Francis upon the occasion of his passing.

WHEREAS, it is with great sorrow that the citizens of New Orleans and the state of Louisiana have learned of Dr. Francis' passing at the age of ninety-four on February 18, 2026; and

WHEREAS, born on March 20, 1931, in Lafayette, Louisiana, to Mabel Coco Francis and Joseph Abel Francis who stressed the importance of education and sent their five children to Catholic schools; and

WHEREAS, after graduating as valedictorian from St. Paul High School, Dr. Francis attended Xavier University in New Orleans on a scholarship, where he earned a B.S. degree in 1952; ultimately becoming the first African-American to enroll at Loyola University Law School in New Orleans, where he earned a Juris Doctor degree in 1955; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Francis, as a practicing attorney, worked with the U.S. Attorney's Office to integrate federal agencies; and as a young lawyer, he represented a civil rights case that rose to the U.S. Supreme Court; however, at that point in his life, he felt he could only help a few people at a time with his legal expertise and believed he could enact greater change as an educator because of the "ripple effect" and transformative power it would produce in people's lives and the community; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Norman Francis became a distinguished higher education leader, civil rights advocate, and business leader who played a key role in New Orleans' civic, cultural, and economic institutions; and

WHEREAS, on April 4, 1968, Dr. Francis assumed the presidency of Xavier University of Louisiana, the same day of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, which played a key role in Xavier's decision to house the Freedom Riders in a campus dormitory; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Francis was the first lay, male, and African-American president of the university and the second African-American to ever serve as president of a Catholic university in the United States; and

WHEREAS, under his leadership, Xavier University grew in both size and dimension; it has more than tripled its enrollment, broadened its curriculum with pharmacy training, and expanded the campus, thus dramatically expanding its national reputation, particularly in the sciences and health professions; and

WHEREAS, through his service as president from 1968 to 2015, for forty-seven years, he reshaped not only Xavier, but the city of New Orleans, and the nation it serves. Xavier University is recognized as a leading producer of black graduates who go on to earn medical and science degrees; a legacy directly tied to Dr. Francis' belief that education must serve both opportunity and justice to help individuals and the community flourish; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Francis served as a confidant to key members of New Orleans' political families: the Landrieus and the Morials, and advised eight U.S. presidents on issues of education and civil rights which earned him dozens of honorary degrees and, in 2006, the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President George W. Bush; and

WHEREAS, as a trusted civic leader whose impact extended far beyond campus, following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Dr. Francis played a pivotal role as the chairman of the Louisiana Recovery Authority, demonstrating the state's faith in his exceptional commitment to his community and its overall advancement as he took charge of planning the recovery and rebuilding of Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, as a business leader, in 1972, he co-founded Liberty Bank and Trust Company to provide financial services to underserved black communities; Liberty Bank is one of the oldest and largest black-owned banks in the United States, and he was an early investor in bringing the New Orleans Saints to the city and the development of the Mercedes Benz Superdome; and

WHEREAS, nationally, Dr. Francis was hailed as a towering figure in philanthropy and education, serving as chair of the United Negro College Fund and holding leadership roles on numerous corporate, foundation, and nonprofit boards; and

WHEREAS, his family, in a statement to Verite News stated, "His legacy lives on not only through his accomplishments and leadership, but through the countless lives he inspired, the students and communities he uplifted, the public officials he advised, and values he passed on to us. We will remember his gentle strength, his unwavering integrity, and his deep passion for equity."; and

WHEREAS, he is survived by six children: Michael, Tim, David, Kathleen, Patrick, and Christina, along with eleven grandchildren, and a host of other family members and friends; and

WHEREAS, he was preceded in death by his loving and devoted wife of sixty years, Blanche Francis; and

WHEREAS, it has been said that the measure of a man is based upon how he lived, his generosity of spirit, and his capacity to love, and by these and other measures, Dr. Norman C. Francis indeed stood tall and will be long-remembered.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby extend sincere and heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Dr. Norman C. Francis, upon his passing and does hereby offer prayers and hopes for peace and comfort for those who mourn as we honor his legacy.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the family of Dr. Norman C. Francis.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES