

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 130

BY SENATOR BOUDREAUX

A RESOLUTION

To commend Dr. E. Joseph Savoie for nearly five decades of exemplary public service, visionary leadership, and extraordinary contributions to higher education in Louisiana and to recognize his well-deserved retirement as president of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

WHEREAS, Dr. E. Joseph Savoie, a native of Sulphur, Louisiana, has devoted his life and career to advancing educational excellence, expanding opportunity, and strengthening the future of Louisiana through higher education; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Savoie began his academic journey at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (UL Lafayette), where he earned both bachelor's and master's degrees, becoming a proud two-time alumnus of the institution he would later lead to unprecedented levels of achievement and national recognition; and

WHEREAS, his distinguished career in higher education began at UL Lafayette, where he served with dedication and distinction in numerous leadership capacities, including as its first vice president for University Advancement, executive director of the Alumni Association, program director for the Union Program Council, student government adviser, and adjunct assistant professor, demonstrating his exceptional ability to inspire students, cultivate leadership, and advance institutional growth; and

WHEREAS, after earning a doctorate in educational leadership and administration from Teacher's College, Columbia University, Dr. Savoie was appointed in 1995 by Governor-elect M.J. "Mike" Foster to serve on his higher education transition team and, in 1996, the Board of Regents selected Dr. Savoie to serve as interim commissioner of higher education; and

WHEREAS, though initially intended to be temporary, Dr. Savoie's remarkable leadership, strategic vision, and unwavering commitment to educational excellence quickly earned the confidence and admiration of state leaders, prompting the Board of Regents to appoint him permanently to the state's highest postsecondary education office; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Savoie served with extraordinary distinction as Louisiana commissioner of higher education for twelve years under three gubernatorial administrations, where he became widely respected as a consensus builder, reformer, and champion for students and institutions across the state; and

WHEREAS, during his tenure as commissioner, Dr. Savoie played an instrumental role in reshaping and modernizing Louisiana's higher education landscape through transformative reforms, including restructuring higher education governance, creating the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, strengthening teacher education programs, securing full funding for the higher education formula, championing student retention and completion in the wake of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and establishing Louisiana's first statewide needs-based financial aid program, thereby expanding educational access and opportunity for countless students and families; and

WHEREAS, former Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco aptly described Dr. Savoie as "the commissioner who has had the most positive influence on all of education in Louisiana," reflecting the profound and lasting impact of his leadership upon the state's educational system; and

WHEREAS, in 2008, following the retirement announcement of longtime UL Lafayette President Dr. Ray P. Authement, Dr. Savoie sought the opportunity to return to his alma mater and continue its legacy of excellence, bringing with him unmatched statewide experience, national perspective, and a deep and abiding love for UL Lafayette; and

WHEREAS, the University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors selected Dr. Savoie to serve as UL Lafayette's sixth president, and on July 2, 2008, he began a historic tenure defined by innovation, strategic growth, academic excellence, and transformational achievement; and

WHEREAS, under Dr. Savoie's visionary leadership, UL Lafayette experienced unprecedented advancement and emerged as one of the nation's premier public research

universities, earning the prestigious Carnegie R1 classification and placing UL Lafayette among the top tier of research institutions in the United States; and

WHEREAS, during his presidency, Dr. Savoie led transformative investments in research and development, resulting in research expenditures increasing by nearly two hundred percent between 2014 and 2021, while also overseeing significant campus expansion and modernization through the construction of new academic buildings, residence halls, research laboratories, athletic and student-centered facilities, as well as the acquisition and development of UL Lafayette's Health Sciences Campus; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Savoie championed academic innovation and workforce development through the expansion of undergraduate and graduate degree programs designed to meet the evolving needs of Louisiana's economy and global society, while also fostering stronger partnerships between UL Lafayette and the surrounding community; and

WHEREAS, in the years following 2020, UL Lafayette achieved record enrollment in undergraduate and graduate programs, reflecting the growing national reputation of the institution and the success of Dr. Savoie's steadfast commitment to student achievement, academic excellence, and institutional advancement; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Savoie devoted thirty-five years of service to the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, including seventeen transformative years as president, and in recognition of his extraordinary leadership, enduring contributions, and unwavering dedication to the institution, the University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors conferred upon him the title of president emeritus upon his retirement; and

WHEREAS, throughout his distinguished career, Dr. E. Joseph Savoie has exemplified integrity, humility, wisdom, and servant leadership, leaving an indelible mark upon higher education in Louisiana and inspiring generations of students, educators, administrators, and public servants through his tireless dedication and extraordinary accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Savoie's legacy will endure not only through the institutions he strengthened and the reforms he championed, but also through the countless lives he influenced and the enduring belief that education remains one of the most powerful forces for opportunity, progress, and public good.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend Dr. E. Joseph Savoie on the occasion of his retirement for his exemplary and selfless public service, visionary leadership, and extraordinary contributions to higher education in Louisiana spanning nearly five decades; does hereby express profound gratitude for his enduring commitment to the students, institutions, and residents of this state; and does hereby extend sincere wishes for continued happiness, health, and success in all of his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Dr. E. Joseph Savoie.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE