

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 124

BY SENATOR HEITMEIER

A RESOLUTION

To express the sincere condolences of the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the death of Rebecca "Becky" Underwood Brechtel, wife, mother, grandmother, educator, devout Christian, and community activist in Mississippi and New Orleans, Louisiana.

WHEREAS, Rebecca "Becky" Underwood was born in Foley, Alabama, on July 7, 1940, and she graduated from Foley High School in 1958; and

WHEREAS, Becky Underwood continued her education at the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, that fall and she was a member of the Dixie Darlings for all four years of her undergraduate work at USM and a member of Delta Zeta social sorority; and

WHEREAS, Becky received her Bachelor of Science degree in Library Science in 1962 and a masters of science degree in counseling and guidance in 1964; and

WHEREAS, while a student at USM, Becky met the great love of her life, Joseph Berengher Brechtel and the two married on January 21, 1965; and

WHEREAS, Becky continued her education at USM, earning a specialist degree in counseling in 1975; and

WHEREAS, Becky's commitment to education caused her to persist in her studies until she earned a doctor of education degree from USM in 1979 and she would thereafter be known to many as "Dr. B"; and

WHEREAS, Dr. B held certification as a guidance counselor, as a secondary social studies teacher, as a librarian, as an English language arts teacher, and as a teacher of the academically gifted; and

WHEREAS, Becky's work life at USM included years as a school librarian, a university instructor of library science, a secondary level guidance counselor, a coordinator with the office of orientation and advisement, an assistant professor in the department of counseling and psychology, and a director of high school and junior college relations from 1969-1979; and

WHEREAS, having accomplished a great deal at her alma mater, USM, Dr. B brought her professional talents to Loyola University in New Orleans, first as the dean of admissions, then in the capacities of director of undergraduate and graduate admissions, and, beginning in 1979, she served as assistant professor of adult education and instructor of sociology; and

WHEREAS, Dr. B eventually moved on to Delgado Community College where she served as vice president of student affairs and college relations; and

WHEREAS, Dr. B also served as assistant vice president for academic affairs as a visiting professor at Indiana State University in Terre Haute; and

WHEREAS, with the education of youth so near to her heart, Dr. B continued her service on the Orleans Parish School Board, as librarian and academic ranking teacher at Benjamin Franklin Magnet Elementary, at Harriet Tubman Elementary School, and at Edna Karr Magnet High School, and as director of the ADEPT after-school programs in seventy schools citywide; and

WHEREAS, Dr. B's last assignment, beginning in 2003, was as the coordinator of the gifted and talented department and as a gifted teacher at Belle Chasse Academy, until her retirement in 2014; and

WHEREAS, Dr. B devoted fifty-two years and her considerable talents to educate children of all ages, from elementary through college and her unique gifts brought distant horizons to within reach of students, whether a young child learning to read and write or a library science major engaged in the process of bringing the magic of books to students at all levels; and

WHEREAS, through her years as an educator of minds from six to twenty-six, Becky was a committed Christian and she employed her faith to serve others, especially, through nearly thirty mission trips to aid the efforts of Father Patrick Quinn of Saltillo, Mexico; and

WHEREAS, throughout her life, Becky was a devout member of several home parishes, including, St. Margaret of Scotland in Foley, Alabama; St. Thomas in Hattiesburg, Mississippi; Holy Name of Mary in Algiers Point, Louisiana; St. Andrew the Apostle in Algiers, Louisiana; and, finally, St. Francis Xavier in Old Metairie, Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, Becky was a dedicated humanitarian and her many community activities reflected that commitment to others, including: the hunger fund at the Center for Jesus the Lord on Rampart Street in New Orleans; Ozanam Inn, an emergency shelter for homeless men in New Orleans; the Harry Thompson Rebuild Center for the Homeless; and the St. Joseph Native American School in South Dakota; and

WHEREAS, Becky and her husband founded the Brechtel Institute and for more than forty years the two created over seven hundred management and motivational workshops that were presented throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, Becky also contributed in a wide-range of activities which brought her well-deserved acclaim, including: the honor of being named a Fulbright Scholar to Africa in the 1990's; she authored or co-authored articles that were published in eight nationally-circulated journals; she was the past national scholarship chairwoman for Delta Zeta national sorority; she was a past chairwoman for the "Garden Gala" to benefit the Little Sisters of the Poor (1994-1998); she served as speaker at the Louisiana Department of Education gifted and talented state conference (2007-2009); she was named outstanding educator by the American Institute for History Education in 2008; she was awarded the Thomas Jefferson Liberty Fellowship from the American Institute of History Education (2007-2009); she was a member of Delta Kappa Gamma, education honorary; she was a member of Pi Tau Chi, religious honorary; and she was a member of Blue Key Honor Fraternity and was honored as the Cabrini District Educator of the Year in 2014; and

WHEREAS, Becky and Berengher were blessed with two children, Joseph "Barry" Berengher Brechtel Jr. and Royceann Brechtel, who filled their lives with joy and happiness; and

WHEREAS, despite the terrible loss of Barry in an automobile accident in 2008, Becky and Berengher derived endless joy and love from their children and grandchildren and Becky is survived by daughter and son-in-law, Royceann Brechtel Fugler and husband, Chad, daughter-in-law, Pam Bitterwolf Brechtel, and grandchildren Joseph B. "Beren" Brechtel, Sophia Marie Brechtel, Bennet Gordon Brechtel, Kyleigh Alyse Fugler, and Catherine "Cate" Ann Fugler; and

WHEREAS, Brechtel Memorial Park on the West Bank, named in memory of John P. Brechtel Jr. who was Becky's father-in-law, is the location of the Joseph Berengher Brechtel Jr. Memorial Park Lagoon, a beautiful location dedicated to Barry in 2008 and now listed on wetland maps of the area as "Brechtel Point"; and

WHEREAS, the Brechtel family, including Becky and Berengher, their children and grandchildren and many cousins, are committed to preserving this beautiful native habitat as a tribute to both John Brechtel and his grandson, Captain Barry, who was part owner of the Breton Sound Marina in the Hopedale area; and

WHEREAS, Becky Underwood Brechtel broadened the minds of her students, enriched her community, lived her Christian faith, and reveled in the love of her family and friends, and her energy and spirit will leave a void in the hearts of all whose lives she influenced.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby express sincere condolences upon the death of Rebecca "Becky" Underwood Brechtel.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Joseph Berengher Brechtel Sr.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE