

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 11

BY SENATORS ALLAIN, TARVER, ABRAHAM, BARROW, BERNARD, BOUDREAUX, BOUIE, CARTER, CATHEY, CLOUD, CONNICK, CORTEZ, FESI, FIELDS, FOIL, HARRIS, HENRY, HENSGENS, HEWITT, JACKSON, JOHNS, LAMBERT, LUNEAU, MCMATH, MILLIGAN, FRED MILLS, ROBERT MILLS, MIZELL, MORRIS, PEACOCK, PETERSON, POPE, PRICE, REESE, SMITH, TALBOT, WARD, WHITE AND WOMACK AND REPRESENTATIVES ST. BLANC, ADAMS, AMEDEE, BACALA, BAGLEY, BEAULLIEU, BISHOP, BOURRIAQUE, BRASS, BROWN, BRYANT, BUTLER, CARPENTER, CARRIER, GARY CARTER, ROBBY CARTER, WILFORD CARTER, CORMIER, COUSSAN, COX, CREWS, DAVIS, DESHOTEL, DEVILLIER, DUBUISSON, DUPLESSIS, DWIGHT, ECHOLS, EDMONDS, EDMONSTON, EMERSON, FARNUM, FIRMENT, FONTENOT, FREEMAN, FREIBERG, FRIEMAN, GADBERRY, GAINES, GAROFALO, GLOVER, GOUDEAU, GREEN, HARRIS, HENRY, HILFERTY, HODGES, HOLLIS, HORTON, HUGHES, HUVAL, ILLG, IVEY, JAMES, JEFFERSON, JENKINS, MIKE JOHNSON, TRAVIS JOHNSON, JONES, JORDAN, KERNER, LACOMBE, LANDRY, LARVADAIN, LYONS, MACK, MAGEE, MARCELLE, MARINO, MCCORMICK, MCFARLAND, MCKNIGHT, MCMAHEN, MIGUEZ, DUSTIN MILLER, GREGORY MILLER, MINCEY, MOORE, MUSCARELLO, NELSON, NEWELL, ORGERON, CHARLES OWEN, ROBERT OWEN, PHELPS, PIERRE, PRESSLY, RISER, ROMERO, SCHAMERHORN, SCHEXNAYDER, SEABAUGH, SELDERS, STAGNI, STEFANSKI, TARVER, THOMAS, THOMPSON, TURNER, VILLIO, WHEAT, WHITE, WILLARD, WRIGHT AND ZERINGUE

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To express the sincere and heartfelt condolences on behalf of the members of the Legislature of Louisiana, past and present, and the citizens of Louisiana to the family of Governor Murphy James "Mike" Foster Jr., businessman and statesman.

WHEREAS, it is with deep regret and profound sorrow that the members of the Louisiana Legislature learned of the passing of former governor, Murphy James "Mike" Foster Jr., at age ninety, on October 4, 2020, in Franklin, Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, Murphy James "Mike" Foster Jr. was born on July 11, 1930, in Shreveport, Louisiana, and raised in Franklin, Louisiana, where as a young man he earned the rank of Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts of America; and

WHEREAS, a committed student of lifelong learning, he graduated from Franklin High School, received a bachelor's degree in chemistry in 1952 from Louisiana State University (LSU), and a Juris Doctor in 2004 from Southern University Law Center, and between his degrees received a certification in welding, fixed wing and helicopter pilots'

licenses, and a twenty-ton boat captain's license; and

WHEREAS, he also was a fighter pilot in the United States Air Force, serving in Korea from 1952 to 1956, attaining the rank of Captain, and upon discharge, he served in the United States Air Force Reserve; and

WHEREAS, after leaving military service, he returned to St. Mary Parish and leased tracts of land to begin his vocation as a sugar cane farmer; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to retain his workforce during the farming off-season, he founded Bayou Sale Contractors, a company specializing in clearing overgrowth for pipeline rights-of-way that eventually grew to have more than five hundred employees; and

WHEREAS, in 1987, at the age of fifty-eight, Mike Foster entered his first political campaign as a member of the Democratic Party for the Twenty-first Senatorial District; in the election, his plain-speaking style and no-nonsense emphasis on solving problems won the confidence of the voters, and he easily defeated the incumbent senator, starting his career in public service which would extend over the next sixteen years; and

WHEREAS, as a senator, one of his main priorities was overhauling the workers' compensation insurance system that had left many businesses paying excessive rates to a shrinking pool of insurance companies; to that end, his most significant legislative accomplishment was the creation of the Louisiana Workers' Compensation Corporation, which lives on today and has saved Louisiana employers hundreds of millions of dollars in rates without reducing the benefits injured workers receive; and

WHEREAS, he switched to the Republican Party in 1995 and qualified as a candidate for governor; his pledge to run Louisiana "like a business" again resonated with voters, and in 1996, Senator Mike Foster became Governor Mike Foster, one hundred four years after his grandfather Governor Murphy J. Foster held that same office; and

WHEREAS, upon his gubernatorial election, Governor Foster assembled a cabinet and senior staff and directed them to "Do The Right Thing", a mantra by which he lived, the standard to which he held his staff, and by which he insisted that Louisiana government serve its citizens; and

WHEREAS, the eight years of his administration saw many successes including focused efforts on workforce development such as the establishment of the Louisiana

Community and Technical College System, the creation of a statewide worker training policy board called the Louisiana Workforce Commission (known today as the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council), the development of the occupational information system to bring awareness to rapidly growing occupations and industries, and the creation of the Incumbent Worker Training Program to improve the quality of Louisiana's workforce, the modernization of the Quality Jobs Act to reward employers for the growing jobs with health insurance benefits, the expansion of the film and video production incentives, and the creation of the research and development and technology commercialization tax credits; and

WHEREAS, Governor Foster's administration also diligently worked to increase teacher pay; to create charter schools, the LA-4 Pre-K Program, and the school and district accountability framework; and perhaps one of his greatest legacies, the creation of the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) Scholarship Program that has provided scholarships for tens of thousands of students over the past two decades; and

WHEREAS, early in his administration, Governor Foster pushed the legislature to restore balance in the legal system, then shifted his focus to paying down state debt while investing hundreds of millions of dollars into accomplishing sorely needed deferred maintenance and technology upgrading of many public buildings; his administration also brought state government to a central location by constructing state office buildings near the state capitol, which centralization revitalized a dying downtown Baton Rouge; and

WHEREAS, his administration made restoring Louisiana's vanishing coast a national issue as well as a statewide priority, presenting constitutional amendments to the legislature and the public that required new federal funding to be dedicated to coastal restoration; and

WHEREAS, in 2002, his administration negotiated for the New Orleans Saints professional football team to stay in New Orleans with little financial risk to the state, approved the construction of the Smoothie King Center so Louisiana could secure a National Basketball Association franchise, and also spearheaded the building of the renowned New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts, the finest performing, visual, literary, and culinary arts program in any secondary school in the nation; and

WHEREAS, his administration fought fraud, abuse, and runaway spending in the Medicaid program to ensure that revenue was available for the Children's Health Insurance

Program (LaCHIP), and brought the charity hospital system under the supervision and professionalism of the LSU system; and

WHEREAS, he strongly supported the "Stelly Plan" that strategically swapped income taxes for certain sales taxes approved by the voters in 2002, and stabilized state finances, ending the repeated pattern of budgeting by crisis and increasing Louisiana's Wall Street bond ratings; and

WHEREAS, Governor Foster sincerely believed that the people have a right to know what their government is doing and why, and during his first term, he had a weekly radio program, taking telephone calls from listeners about government and answering every question or taking the name and phone number of the person calling and having the appropriate person call back with an answer to the question; and

WHEREAS, he was the first Republican governor elected for consecutive terms since Reconstruction and when he left office in 2004, Louisiana was in a dramatically better place financially and the foundation had been laid for future success in all areas of state government; and

WHEREAS, for those who were lucky enough to serve with him or work with him, it was his genuine humility and generosity that made him an inspiration to others and a true leader; and

WHEREAS, he credited his success as a legislator and as governor to his nonpartisan approach to government, always putting Louisiana's needs and priorities first; and

WHEREAS, an avid outdoorsman, he will also be remembered for his love of fishing along the Louisiana coast and hunting in southwest Louisiana on Pecan Island, as well as riding his motorcycle and playing tennis; and

WHEREAS, Governor Foster was a loving husband to his wife of more than fifty years, Alice C. Foster, and father to his son Murphy J. Foster III (Diane) and daughter Ramelle Foster, and sons, Paul West (Lisette) and Trey West (Sandra), and a grandfather to nine grandchildren and five great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, the success of the state of Louisiana, the strength of its communities, and the overall vitality of American society depend in great measure upon people like Murphy James "Mike" Foster Jr.; and

WHEREAS, with the death of Governor Murphy James "Mike" Foster Jr., Louisiana has lost one of its finest sons, a quintessential southern gentleman who loved his community and whose accomplishments have left an indelible mark upon his community, state, and nation.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby express sincere and heartfelt condolences upon the death of Governor Murphy James "Mike" Foster Jr., and does hereby record for posterity his outstanding achievements, and extend enduring appreciation for the tremendous pride and honor he will forever bring to the Franklin community, the state of Louisiana, and the United States of America.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the family of Governor Murphy James "Mike" Foster Jr.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES