

Regular Session, 2013

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 149

BY REPRESENTATIVE CONNICK AND SENATOR ALARIO

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To commend the Stop the Tolls organization for their efforts in educating the public about the need to eliminate the tolls on the Crescent City Connection Bridge.

WHEREAS, the Crescent City Connection Bridge has provided a vital transportation link over the Mississippi River between the east and west banks of the parishes of Jefferson and Orleans; and

WHEREAS, in 1989, tolls were authorized by statute to be collected for passage over the second span of the Crescent City Connection Bridge; and

WHEREAS, the statutory authority to collect these tolls was set to expire several times only to ultimately be extended until December 31, 2012; and

WHEREAS, prior to the December 31, 2012, expiration of tolls on the Crescent City Connection Bridge, a ground swell of opposition to another extension resulted in a concerned group of citizens creating the organization Stop the Tolls; and

WHEREAS, with little to no commercial backing, Jefferson Parish residents Michael Teachworth and Patrick Hand III, instrumental players in the Stop the Tolls, set out to educate the New Orleans metropolitan area on the history of the Crescent City Connection Bridge and the tolls; and

WHEREAS, while the efforts of Stop the Tolls and many others prevented an outright extension of the tolls, Act No. 865 of the 2012 Regular Session of the Legislature called for an election to be held to determine whether or not tolls would be extended on the Crescent City Connection Bridge; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Act No. 865 of the 2012 Regular Session of the Legislature, the governor called an election in the parishes of Jefferson, Orleans, and Plaquemines to determine whether tolls would be collected, beginning January 1, 2013, and ending on December 31, 2033, on the Crescent City Connection Bridge at the rate provided by law; and

WHEREAS, despite the Herculean efforts of Stop the Tolls, the final election results showed that the proposition passed by a narrow margin and that tolls would continue to be collected on the Crescent City Connection Bridge until the year 2033; and

WHEREAS, in December of 2012, "Michael J. Teachworth v. Bobby Jindal, in his official capacity as Governor of Louisiana, and Tom Schedler, in his official capacity as the Louisiana Secretary of State" was filed by attorney Patrick Hand III; and

WHEREAS, the petition sought, among other things, to contest the results of the election held on November 6, 2012, to obtain declaratory relief nullifying the vote certified by the secretary of state which extended the tolls on the bridge, and to obtain any other relief allowed under the law; and

WHEREAS, a trial on the merits was held on March 4, 2013, and the trial concluded on March 5, 2013, with the Honorable William A. Morvant declaring the election on November 6, 2012, void, only insofar as the results of the Greater New Orleans Crescent City Connection Toll Proposition; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable William A. Morvant ordered that a new election be held on May 4, 2013, in the parishes of Jefferson, Orleans, and Plaquemines to determine whether or not tolls would be renewed and/or extended as proposed in Act No. 865 of the 2012 Regular Session of the Legislature; and

WHEREAS, never wavering, Stop the Tolls engaged in a grassroots campaign to put an end to what the organization touted as an unfair tax on the citizens of the west bank; and

WHEREAS, Stop the Tolls used social media, traditional media routes, town hall style meetings, and old-fashioned word of mouth to convince the voters of the parishes of Jefferson, Orleans, and Plaquemines that they were offered another chance to end the tolls; and

WHEREAS, on March 4, 2013, the voters of the parishes of Jefferson, Orleans, and Plaquemines came out in force to finally put an end to the tolls; and

WHEREAS, on May 8, 2013, election officials in Jefferson, Orleans, and Plaquemines parishes certified that seventy-seven percent of the voters in those parishes cast "no" votes on the Crescent City Connection Bridge election proposition; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the vote ending tolls on the Crescent City Connection Bridge, the Department of Transportation and Development began the process to decommission the toll plaza the evening of Wednesday, May 8, 2013; and

WHEREAS, the May 4, 2013, election results and the decommissioning of the toll plaza would not have been possible without the passion and hard work of the members of the Stop the Tolls organization; and

WHEREAS, Stop the Tolls is the perfect example of how the will of the people can still ultimately prevail in the face of incredibly unfavorable odds and that favorable results can still be obtained when citizens band together.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend the Stop the Tolls organization for their efforts in educating the people of Jefferson, Orleans, and Plaquemines parishes on the need to end the tolls on the Crescent City Connection Bridge and their May 4, 2013, election victory.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a suitable copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Michael Teachworth and Patrick Hand III, of the Stop the Tolls organization.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE