

2017 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 37

BY REPRESENTATIVES STOKES, BARRAS, ARMES, BAGNERIS, BROADWATER,
STEVE CARTER, IVEY, NANCY LANDRY, LEGER, LEOPOLD, MARINO,
THOMAS, AND CARMODY

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To recognize and commend Team Gleason and the Gleason Initiative Foundation for tireless advocacy on behalf of persons with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and other neuromuscular diseases and injuries.

WHEREAS, on September 25, 2006, Steve Gleason emerged as a sports hero in New Orleans and as a powerful symbol to the nation and the world of the city's resilience in the wake of Hurricane Katrina when, while playing for the Saints against the Atlanta Falcons, his sensational block of a punt resulted in a Saints touchdown and the first score in the team's first post-Katrina home game to be played in the Louisiana Superdome; and

WHEREAS, this play remains one of the most celebrated moments in Saints history and is immortalized in "Rebirth", a dynamic bronze statue at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome depicting Steve Gleason's amazing athletic feat; and

WHEREAS, less than five years after this illustrious moment, Steve Gleason would arrive at a turning point in his life when, in January of 2011, he was diagnosed with ALS; and

WHEREAS, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, ALS is characterized by degeneration of the cell bodies of motor neurons in the spinal cord which causes muscles to atrophy and the patient to become a quadriplegic; and

WHEREAS, the disease is considered to be a fatal condition; it currently has no known cause, means of protection, or cure, and patients with ALS survive only two to five years on average from the time of diagnosis; and

WHEREAS, a diagnosis of ALS is particularly troubling because the disease does not affect mental capacity, thus the patient remains alert, conscious of their surroundings, and aware of the loss of motor functions and the inevitable course of the disease; and

WHEREAS, in the face of these circumstances, Steve Gleason famously declared there will be "NO WHITE FLAGS", and this became the mantra for the mission he has undertaken since to show that people can not only live after being diagnosed with ALS, but can thrive; and

WHEREAS, to accomplish his mission, Steve and his wife, Michel, formed Team Gleason and organized the Gleason Initiative Foundation; and

WHEREAS, based in New Orleans, the Gleason Initiative Foundation helps to provide leading-edge technology, equipment, and services to persons with neuromuscular diseases or injuries; fosters a global conversation about ALS in order to find solutions and ultimately an end to the disease; and raises public awareness of ALS by providing and documenting extraordinary life adventures for individuals living with the disease and other neuromuscular conditions; and

WHEREAS, the Gleason Initiative Foundation was instrumental in founding the Team Gleason House for Innovative Living, a residential facility in New Orleans which is designed to help people with incurable neuromuscular disorders live more independently and is only the second facility of its kind in the nation; and

WHEREAS, Team Gleason, the NFL players and coaches who make up Steve's football family, and his many fans beyond the world of football all stand firmly by his belief that each person who is diagnosed with ALS has the right to fight and to receive proper treatment and the best available care; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Gleason's personal accomplishments are as impressive as those of the organization that bears his name; despite the progression of his disease, he has traveled on the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu, been the namesake of an Act of Congress (the Steve Gleason Act of 2015, Public Law No. 114-40, making speech generating technology more accessible), and starred in an award-winning documentary film; and

WHEREAS, among all of his achievements and experiences, the one he treasures most is being a loving father to his son, Rivers, the center of his and Michel's life; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Gleason has shown his indomitable spirit in countless ways and is a beloved adopted son of Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, this state is honored to be the home of Team Gleason and the Gleason Initiative Foundation, groups that are inspiring hope and making a world of difference in the lives of people with ALS.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby recognize and commend Team Gleason and the Gleason Initiative Foundation for tireless advocacy on behalf of persons with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and other neuromuscular diseases and injuries.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a suitable copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the executive director of the Gleason Initiative Foundation and to Steve, Michel, and Rivers Gleason.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE