

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 77

BY SENATOR FOIL AND REPRESENTATIVE FREIBERG

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To express the sincere condolences of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the passing of James H. (Jim) Wharton, PhD, former chancellor of Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge and to recognize his lifetime of achievements.

WHEREAS, it is with deep regret and profound sorrow that the members of the Legislature of Louisiana have learned of the passing of James H. (Jim) Wharton, on May 22, 2021, at age eighty-three; and

WHEREAS, Jim was born to John Henry and Faye Walling Wharton on July 23, 1937, just outside of Mangum, Oklahoma, and married Joan McPherson on November 23, 1956, in West Monroe, Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, he earned his PhD in chemical physics from LSU in 1962 and served as an assistant professor of chemistry for the remainder of the year; and

WHEREAS, Jim served in the United States Army Ordinance Corps from 1963 to 1965 where he was assigned to the Marshall Space Flight Center to work on the Saturn V moon landing program for NASA; and

WHEREAS, at Dean A.R. Choppin's request, he returned to LSU in 1965 as an Assistant Professor and was promoted to Associate Dean of the College of Chemistry and Physics in 1968; and

WHEREAS, Jim was named Dean of the Junior Division in 1971 where he automated student records for the first time in LSU history; and

WHEREAS, in 1974, Chancellor Paul Murrill promoted Jim to Dean of the General College where he had twelve thousand students and was responsible for The Junior Division, University College, The Admissions Office, The Registrars Office, Student Aid, and High School Relations; and

WHEREAS, in 1979, the LSU Board of Supervisors sent Dr. Wharton to serve as Chancellor of LSU in Alexandria during a difficult period in the history of that campus; and

WHEREAS, Jim was chosen by the LSU Board of Supervisors to be Chancellor of Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College in 1981 and served until 1989; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Wharton taught Chemistry from 1990 through May 2008 when he fully retired from the university; and

WHEREAS, during his eight-year tenure as LSU's third Chancellor, he steered the state's flagship institution of higher learning to unprecedented progress while guiding the institution through one of its most difficult financial periods and, through much adversity, he made major improvements in the quality of the university's faculty and students, its academic standards, its private fundraising programs, and its research effort, while contending with continual state budget cuts; and

WHEREAS, in 1982, he pushed to create the Louisiana Endowment Trust Fund for Eminent Scholars which became a reality in 1983 and was the forerunner of today's support program for faculty chairs and professorships; and

WHEREAS, LSU's first admission standards were approved in 1984 for implementation in 1988, the ACT score improved for entering freshman students, and the graduation rate improved from thirty-three percent to forty-seven percent; and

WHEREAS, the hallmark of his administration was the Quality Trust Program, designed to upgrade instruction and research and to maintain LSU's statewide "flagship" status as Louisiana's premier comprehensive university; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Wharton was also responsible for reorganizing and streamlining the university's internal administration and succeeded in bringing peak efficiency to LSU operations which boasted the lowest per student overhead cost of any comparable national institution; and

WHEREAS, funding from outside grants from state, federal, and private sources increased dramatically and LSU's research grants went from \$17 million to more than \$50 million per year and funds from private gifts also increased significantly; and

WHEREAS, in 1987, the Carnegie Foundation designated LSU as a "Research University I", the highest advanced-research ranking given by the foundation which put LSU in a group of forty-five public and twenty-five private universities; and

WHEREAS, the LSU Foundation was converted from a system foundation to a private foundation and its assets increased from \$7 million in 1981 to \$45 million in 1989; private funds on deposit with the university increased from \$2 million to \$12 million; and great progress was made toward building a strong and very active LSU Alumni Association; and

WHEREAS, the bylaws and articles of incorporation for Tiger Athletic Foundation (TAF) were written and the organization undertook the first major improvement of athletic facilities with private funds; and

WHEREAS, an office of technology transfer which has brought in more than \$10 million was created and, near the end of his term as chancellor, Jim raised \$8.5 million in private funds toward the purchase of a \$17 million supercomputer that had a significant impact on the future of the university; and

WHEREAS, after serving as chancellor he remained as a fund raiser and highly regarded teacher, continuing a long tradition of volunteer service to the state and LSU; and

WHEREAS, he served as chairman of the committee which oversaw the implementation of federal and state laws providing for the appropriate education of all handicapped children; he handled the political, economic, and contractual issues required to bring the LASER Interferometer Gravity-Wave Observatory to Louisiana, which later proved, and fulfilled the last prediction of Einstein's general theory of relativity; and

WHEREAS, Jim served as chair of the scientific team advising the state on the proper disposal of oilfield wastes, chair of the advisory committee on 8-G expenditures for the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, chair of the capital construction committee for renovations and additions to the University Laboratory School, and consultant to the state on desegregation; and

WHEREAS, he worked with Patrick Taylor as a volunteer on the TOPS program, later served as a consultant to Mr. Taylor on access to higher education, and after Mr. Taylor's death, he continued his service as a consultant to Mrs. Taylor while a board member of the Patrick F. Taylor Foundation; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Wharton served as a higher education consultant to the state of Mississippi and to the University of Alabama System; and

WHEREAS, he was named the LSU Alumnus of the year for 2005 and received commendations for his service to the state and the university from the Louisiana Senate, the Louisiana House of Representatives and in a proclamation by the governor; and

WHEREAS, he was preceded in death by his sister, Margaret Caffey, and his parents; and

WHEREAS, he is survived by his wife of sixty-four years, Joan McPherson Wharton; two children, Sherri Wharton Hadskey and John Scott Wharton and his wife Bridget; five grandsons, Beau (Ashby) and Alex Hadskey and Jake (Camille), Sam and Will Wharton; two sisters, Kathryn Wharton and Nancy Drummond; and one brother, Sam Wharton; and

WHEREAS, Jim Wharton was a generous man possessing an abundance of interests and skills, whose intellect and leadership brought tremendous success to the LSU system, whose positive effects on the university are still prevalent, and whose memory shall remain one of humility, humanity, and compassion.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby express sincere condolences upon the passing of James H. (Jim) Wharton PhD, the third chancellor of Louisiana State University.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to his widow, Joan McPherson Wharton.

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES