

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 13

BY SENATORS PEACOCK, ALARIO, ALLAIN, APPEL, BARROW, BISHOP, BOUDREAUX, BROWN, CARTER, CHABERT, CLAITOR, COLOMB, CORTEZ, DONAHUE, ERDEY, FANNIN, GATTI, HEWITT, JOHNS, LAFLEUR, LAMBERT, LONG, LUNEAU, MARTINY, MILKOVICH, MILLS, MIZELL, MORRELL, MORRISH, PERRY, PETERSON, RISER, GARY SMITH, JOHN SMITH, TARVER, THOMPSON, WALSWORTH, WARD AND WHITE

A RESOLUTION

To express the sincere condolences of the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the death of businesswoman and former Louisiana State Senator, the Honorable Virginia Ruth Kilpatrick Shehee, and to commend the legacy of public service she leaves to the people of her community, state, and nation.

WHEREAS, Virginia Shehee passed peacefully from this life on July 6, 2015, less than one week from her ninety-second birthday; she was a living legend in Shreveport and a gentlewoman of abundant social grace and civic acumen; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Shehee was a classic lady as well known for her cultural endeavors as her quick wit and contagious smile; she possessed an innate self-confidence, pursued many interests, and supported numerous issues and institutions that were very close to her heart; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Virginia Shehee was an astute business leader in the Ark-La-Tex region who acted as president and CEO of Kilpatrick Life Insurance and Rose-Neath Funeral Homes and Cemeteries, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, her exposure to politics began while still a teenager when she spent her summers employed as a secretary for future governor, Jimmie H. Davis; they shared an enduring friendship and, years later, she would support the adoption of "You Are My Sunshine" as the official state song; and

WHEREAS, having served a single term representing Senate District 38 from 1976-1980, Senator Shehee made history as the first woman to serve in the Louisiana Senate elected on her own merit who did not succeed her spouse; she focused on worthy issues such as right-to-work, improved parish roads, and funding for the arts; and even after her tenure in the Senate, her door remained open to her constituents and any aspiring politicians who sought her counsel; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Shehee continued to provide expertise in other facets of state government as a member of the Transition Team on Higher Education for governors Buddy Roemer and Mike Foster, as cochair of the Transition Committee on Ethics for Governor Bobby Jindal, as a member of the Louisiana Governor's Mansion Foundation Board of Directors, and with service on the Judicial Council of the Louisiana Supreme Court; and

WHEREAS, born in Houston, Texas, and reared in Shreveport, Louisiana, Virginia Shehee was an involved participant in the betterment of Caddo Parish which was enhanced by ties to her alma maters, C. E. Byrd High School and Centenary College, her family businesses, and her interests in the arts, education, historic preservation, government, medical research, economic growth, humanities, and charitable organizations; very few activities escaped her attention and influence; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Shehee supported numerous causes, in particular, entities unique to Shreveport such as the Symphony Orchestra, the Louisiana State Fair and its Junior Livestock Show, and the historic preservation of the Strand Theatre, Oakland Cemetery, and other historic architecture; and

WHEREAS, as an alumna of Centenary College with receipt of a bachelor of art's degree in English, 1943, an Honorary Doctor of Laws, 2002, and election to its Alumni Hall of Fame, 1973, Virginia Shehee was honored to serve as a lifetime member of the Board of Trustees, to witness the addition to the campus of Shehee Stadium and Kilpatrick Auditorium, and to encourage two generations of her family members to attend this prestigious institution; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Shehee received honorary degrees and designations from many state universities; she served on the Louisiana State University Board of Supervisors and was named to the LSU Alumni Hall of Distinction; and at LSU-Shreveport she established an endowed academic chair for Insurance and Financial Service and was named a Distinguished Business Executive on Campus; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Shehee was well ahead of her time, a trailblazer who broke through "glass ceilings" in business, government, and community development and established new precedents as the first woman to become a member of the Omicron Delta Kappa honor society, to receive the Community Council Special Humanitarian Award for

Outstanding Service and the Clyde E. Fant Memorial Award for Community Service, and to be named Business Leader of the Year by the Shreveport Chamber of Commerce and "Mr. Shreveport" by the Optimist Club; and

WHEREAS, in the healthcare community she served as chairman emeritus of the Biomedical Research Center Foundation of Northwestern Louisiana, where its research institute was named for Mrs. Shehee in honorable recognition of her tireless guidance and years of service as its most outstanding volunteer; she was also cited by the Shreveport Medical Society with receipt of the award for Outstanding Contribution to the Advancement of Medicine; and she garnered similar awards from the March of Dimes and the Arthritis Foundation; and

WHEREAS, under her tutelage, Kilpatrick Life Insurance became the largest domestic life insurer in Louisiana; she served as chairman of the Life Insurers Conference, Louisiana Insurers Conference, Louisiana Life Insurance Guarantee Association, and as a board member of the American Council of Life Insurance; and

WHEREAS, economic growth was foremost on her mind to improve the status quo of northwest Louisiana, and Virginia lent her business savvy to promote the lofty goals of the Shreveport Committee of One Hundred, Shreveport-Bossier Community Renewal, the Council For a Better Louisiana, and the Louisiana Committee of 100 for Economic Development; and

WHEREAS, her strong commitment to community spanned cultural, civic, and academic spheres and was beneficial to multitudes in a myriad of ways; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Shehee was a fervent supporter of the United States Armed Services and felt privileged to serve on the Board of Trustees for the National D-Day Museum in New Orleans; and

WHEREAS, Senator Shehee was inducted into the Louisiana Political Hall of Fame in 2004 and was named a Living Legend by the Friends of Louisiana Public Broadcasting in 2006; and

WHEREAS, as a person of deep religious conviction, Virginia served as senior warden in St. Paul Episcopal Church and she humbly received the Benemerenti Medal bestowed by Pope John Paul II and presented by Bishop William Friend of the Catholic

Diocese of Shreveport for outstanding community service; and

WHEREAS, for her generosity and vision, she received a host of awards and honors far too numerous to count; and

WHEREAS, one of her most cherished honors was receipt of the Mary Johnston Award for Outstanding Service from the Gardens of the American Rose Society; her mother, Nell Peters Kilpatrick, was instrumental in its establishment in Shreveport; and

WHEREAS, while she was humbled by the accolades she received throughout her lifetime, she was most proud of her children and her family's contributions to the betterment of the community; and

WHEREAS, she was preceded in death by her loving husband, William Peyton Shehee Jr., and is survived by her son, Andrew Michael; daughters, Ann Shane Shehee, Nell Elizabeth S. Kramer, and Margaret Scott S. Cole; her grandchildren, and a host of extended family and close friends; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Shehee was a great lady who will be sorely missed by her community and state and will always be remembered for her love of family, travel, literature, animals, many passions in life, and accomplishments that were achieved by her own hand which resulted in a most fascinating and distinguished life.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby extend heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Virginia Ruth Kilpatrick Shehee, wife, mother, businesswoman, legislator, community leader, volunteer, Christian, patron, humanitarian, and philanthropist who set an extraordinary standard of graciousness and good citizenship for all to emulate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to her son, Andrew Michael Shehee and daughters, Ann Shane Shehee, Nell Elizabeth S. Kramer, and Margaret Scott S. Cole.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE