

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 187

BY SENATORS GATTI, ALARIO, APPEL, BISHOP, BOUDREAUX, CORTEZ, ERDEY, FANNIN, JOHNS, LUNEAU, MILLS, PEACOCK, PERRY, TARVER, THOMPSON, WALSWORTH AND WARD

A RESOLUTION

To express the sincere condolences of the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the death of Mayor Jesse Eugene Smith Jr. of Arcadia, Louisiana.

WHEREAS, Mayor Smith died of complications from a lung illness surrounded by family at Willis-Knighton Pierremont Health Center in Shreveport, Louisiana, on April 23, 2018; and

WHEREAS, Jesse Eugene Smith Jr. was born on May 27, 1933 to Jesse Eugene Smith Sr. and Maxine Crawford Smith in the Driskill Mountain community of DeSoto Parish; and

WHEREAS, in 1946, the Smith family moved to Arcadia, leaving the rolling hill country of North Louisiana that so nurtured this family of faith, promoting a close relationship with each other and nearby friends; and

WHEREAS, in 1953, Eugene Smith graduated from Arcadia High School and on the following July 10, he married his sweetheart, Billie Nichols, who is now left to treasure the memory of her dear husband of nearly sixty-five years; and

WHEREAS, later in 1953, Eugene Smith was drafted into the United States Army and he and his wife were stationed at Fort Dix, New Jersey, where their first child, Milton Eugene Smith, was born in 1954; and

WHEREAS, in 1955, the family returned to Arcadia and Smith opened his first business, Smith Grocery Store; he attended Louisiana Tech University, and their second child, daughter Sheri Ann, was born in 1959; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Smith's work career included stints as accountant for H.R. Hayes Lumber Company in Arcadia and Monroe and he worked for several years for Firestone in both Arcadia and in Minden, Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, in 1963, Eugene Smith was hired by the local Office of Motor Vehicles, where he quickly advanced, eventually becoming the Assistant Administrator of the Office of Motor Vehicles from which he retired in 1990; and

WHEREAS, two years after his retirement from the state, Eugene Smith was appointed as the executive director of the Louisiana Motor Vehicle Commission by Governor Edwin Edwards; and

WHEREAS, shortly after that appointment ended, Eugene Smith entered the elective political arena, running successfully for Justice of the Peace in Bienville Parish, which was followed in 2003 by election to the office of the Mayor of Arcadia, where he continued to serve until his death; and

WHEREAS, in his first run for mayor, Eugene Smith's campaign slogan was "Watch Arcadia Grow!" and in his first re-election campaign, he encouraged new businesses and residents to "Come Grow with Us", both of these expressions reflecting his belief in Arcadia as a wonderful place to live, work, and run a business; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Smith's enthusiasm for his community was palpable and he worked tirelessly to create and sustain an atmosphere that was conducive to large and small industries as well as retail businesses locating in the area; and

WHEREAS, Eugene Smith took great pride in his beloved Arcadia, and he never passed up an opportunity to describe the virtues of that Bienville Parish municipality to anyone who was interested; and

WHEREAS, after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and redistributed much of its population, Mayor Smith hired the town's first black city attorney, Patrick Jefferson, who currently represents the town and surrounding area in the Louisiana House of Representatives and who spoke in praise of Mayor Smith, saying "He was a man of the people . . . Arcadia was made the better because of his stewardship"; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Smith was active in his community, serving as a member of the executive board of the Louisiana Municipal Association, vice president of LMA District B, and eventually, serving on the executive board of that association, a vital organization, especially in its advocacy for Louisiana's cities and towns, especially crucial on issues facing small municipalities around the state; and

WHEREAS, having a wide range of interests, Mayor Smith served on the board of local civic organizations, including the Business and Industry Development Company, Louisiana Entrepreneur and Small Business Commission, and, under Governor Jindal, chairman of the Coordinating Development Corporation; and

WHEREAS, Eugene Smith also served as president of the Arcadia Jaycees, was commander of Ham Michael American Legion Post, and was active in the First Baptist Church of Arcadia, the Bienville Parish Chamber of Commerce, the Arcadia Lions Club, and the Arcadia Masonic Lodge; and

WHEREAS, the eighty-four year old mayor joined his brother, Ray Dean Smith, who served as mayor of Arcadia from 1976 to 1994; and

WHEREAS, Eugene Smith was known and respected around the state in connection with his years as mayor and through his activities on behalf of municipalities at the state capitol and his involvement with the Louisiana Municipal Association so much so that Governor Edwards commented on his death, saying, "Mayor Smith was an exceptional leader who proudly served all of the people of Arcadia"; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Eugene Smith represented all that is good in America and in American politics today; he was fervent in his praise for his town and its citizens; he strove to make his community ever more economically viable; he championed institutions in his area, especially Grambling State University; he loved his family and Billie, his ever loving wife and partner in all endeavors; he was active in his church; and he was passionate about bringing a better life to the people of Arcadia, all of whom he loved and respected.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby express the sincere condolences upon the death of Mayor Jesse Eugene Smith Jr. of Arcadia, Louisiana, a tireless worker for his town as a great place to live, to work, and to raise a family.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Billie Smith, widow of Mayor Eugene Smith Jr.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE