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CONTACT: DIEDRE PIERCE KELLY

PHONE: 504.242.4198

SENATOR BISHOP ISSUES STATEMENT ON SAINTS NATIONAL ANTHEM CONTROVERSY

District 4 State Senator Wesley T. Bishop, a lawyer, veteran and New Orleans lawmaker, issues the following statement regarding the New Orleans Saints and the National Anthem controversy:

“As a lawyer, lawmaker and veteran, I would like to respond to some of the comments made by my legislative colleagues regarding the protest by several members of the Saints organization. Their comments and threats of future sanctions are an attempt to punish the Saints organization for allowing its players to exercise their constitutional right.

“To my knowledge, no Saints player participated in any protest prior to the recent remarks made by President Donald Trump. It's unfortunate that the president found it necessary to refer to any player that has participated in this protest in such a disappointing and inappropriate manner. However, what is even more concerning is that in a state which has traditionally and consistently shown support for the second amendment's right to bear arms, some of my colleagues seem to have so little regard for the first amendment's right to free speech. In fact, in law school I learned that there is nothing more un-American than preventing those who want to have their voices heard from doing so.

“As a veteran, I proudly served my country and state with honor and distinction. In doing so, I fought for the very right that they are seeking to diminish. I do not consider the actions of the participants as being disrespectful or insulting to our anthem, our flag or our country. If nothing else, these symbols stand for justice, equality and the ability to champion a position that may be unpopular or misunderstood. I may not always agree with what you have to say, but I will defend to the end your right to say it. In America, you don't have to ask permission to protest; nor do you leave your constitutional protections at the stadium door.

“The issues that have been raised as a result of the league-wide protest are real and deserve our fullest attention. Now is not the time to grandstand and play politics. Many entities in the state of Louisiana receive state benefits while expressing political views. If we as lawmakers don't take a stand to respect the constitution, why should anyone else? The citizens of Louisiana are expecting more from us.”

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