

By: Representatives Saucier, Scott (80th), To: Rules
Bailey, Banks, Blackmon, Bozeman, Broomfield,
Brown, Chaney, Clark, Clarke, Coleman (29th),
Coleman (65th), Ellis, Evans, Flaggs,
Fleming, Fredericks, Gibbs, Green (96th),
Henderson (26th), Henderson (9th), Holland,
Huddleston, Hudson, Johnson, King, Middleton,
Morris, Myers, Perkins, Roberson, Robinson
(63rd), Ryan, Straughter, Thomas, Thornton,
Wallace, Watson, West, Young

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 173

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION MEMORIALIZING THE PRESIDENT OF THE
2 UNITED STATES TO PARDON PERSONS CONVICTED IN THE PORT CHICAGO
3 MUTINY.

4 WHEREAS, in 1942, the United States Navy built Port Chicago,
5 a naval ammunition base located 30 miles northeast of San
6 Francisco for the loading and shipping of ammunition to troops
7 fighting the Japanese in the Pacific; and

8 WHEREAS, all of the sailors performing the extremely
9 dangerous job of loading the munitions were African-American and
10 the commanding officers overseeing the loading were white; and

11 WHEREAS, the lack of official training and written guidelines
12 meant that these men had to learn on the job the handling of
13 volatile explosives, which eventually led to disaster; and

14 WHEREAS, on July 17, 1944, two munition ships, the E.A.
15 Bryant and the Quinalt Victory, exploded while being loaded with
16 bombs, shells and depth charges, killing instantly everyone on the
17 pier and aboard the two ships; and

18 WHEREAS, this explosion was the biggest home-front disaster
19 of World War II and resulted in an amazing 15% of all
20 African-American casualties sustained during the war; and

21 WHEREAS, shortly after the disaster, a Navy Court of Inquiry
22 cleared all white officers of responsibility and charged the
23 African-American sailors claiming the rough handling of munitions
24 caused the explosion; and

25 WHEREAS, traumatized by the horrible explosion, 258
26 ammunition loaders, all of whom were African-American, refused to

27 return to work that was considered too dangerous for white
28 sailors; and

29 WHEREAS, the Navy responded to the work stoppage by
30 imprisoning the men on the barge for three days, and eventually,
31 all but 50 African-American sailors returned to loading ships; and

32 WHEREAS, the 50 sailors who refused to return to work were
33 court-martialed, convicted of mutiny and imprisoned until the end
34 of the war; and

35 WHEREAS, after the war, with the help of the NAACP and a
36 young lawyer named Thurgood Marshall, the sentences of the 50
37 African-American sailors were significantly reduced, but not
38 overturned:

39 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
40 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE SENATE CONCURRING
41 THEREIN, That we do hereby memorialize the President of the United
42 States to pardon those 50 African-American sailors convicted in
43 the Port Chicago mutiny.

44 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
45 furnished to the President of the United States and members of the
46 Mississippi Congressional Delegation.