

By: Senator(s) Furniss, Horhn

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 564

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING AND CONGRATULATING
2 BLUESMAN JOHNNIE BILLINGTON OF LAMBERT, MISSISSIPPI, UPON HIS
3 RECEIPT OF THE GOVERNOR'S AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE ARTS "ARTS
4 IN EDUCATION" AWARD.

5 WHEREAS, twenty years ago Johnnie Billington came home to the
6 Mississippi Delta from Chicago after playing the Blues with
7 musical greats Muddy Waters, Elmore James and Earl Hooker; and

8 WHEREAS, his love for his family brought him back to his
9 Delta roots where he has chosen to stay and use his enormous
10 talent to teach children the art of the Blues; and

11 WHEREAS, "Mr. Johnnie," as his students, fans and friends
12 know him, started giving lessons to neighborhood children in the
13 evenings after he closed his automobile repair shop each day. His
14 belief that everyone has some kind of artistic talent offered a
15 welcoming environment for children to enter and explore the world
16 of the Blues; and

17 WHEREAS, his instruction grew and expanded into the public
18 schools in Mississippi and Arkansas where his students have
19 mastered their art and performed in venues from the mid-South to
20 New York City, and most recently in the Notodden Blues Festival in
21 Norway; and

22 WHEREAS, he helped form the Delta Blues Education Fund, a
23 nonprofit organization dedicated to providing instruction in the
24 Blues to the young people of the Delta; and

25 WHEREAS, in 1993, the Mississippi Arts Commission awarded Mr.
26 Billington Master Folk Artist Status. He has received both the
27 W.C. Handy Award for "Keeping the Blues Alive in Education" and

28 the Early Wright Award for "Outstanding Work to Preserve, Promise,
29 Perpetuate and Document the Blues in its Homeland, the Mississippi
30 Delta"; and

31 WHEREAS, it is with great pride that we recognize this Blues
32 legend who has brought great honor to his community and our state:

33 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MISSISSIPPI STATE
34 SENATE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That we
35 do hereby commend and congratulate Bluesman Johnnie Billington of
36 Lambert, Mississippi, upon his receipt of the Governor's Awards
37 for Excellence in the Arts "Arts in Education" award.

38 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
39 Johnnie Billington at the awards ceremony to be held on March 19,
40 1999, and be made available to members of the Capitol Press Corps.