

By: Walls, Horhn, Harden, Jackson, Furniss, To: Rules
Burton

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 551

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE LIFE OF CLARKSDALE'S
2 EARLY WRIGHT, MISSISSIPPI'S FIRST BLACK DISC JOCKEY.

3 WHEREAS, Clarksdale, Mississippi's, legendary radio
4 personality, Early Wright, whose nightly "Soul Man" broadcast
5 spanned more than half a century and drew national media attention
6 to the Delta's blues and gospel heritage, departed this earthly
7 life on December 10, 1999, in Memphis, Tennessee, at the age of
8 84; and

9 WHEREAS, through the decades Clarksdale listeners tuned in to
10 Wright's unique broadcast he always opened, "A pleasant good
11 evening to you, ladies and gentlemen, the 'Soul Man' is here", and
12 interspersed among blues and gospel records were public service
13 messages telling children to stay in school, requesting volunteers
14 to deliver food to shut-ins, and encouraging citizens to get out
15 and vote; and

16 WHEREAS, Early was born in 1915 in Jefferson, Carroll County,
17 Mississippi, was first a farmer, then a hostler tending to stock
18 at Council Spur, moved to Clarksdale in 1937, learned to drive a
19 train, became a mechanic and opened his own business, and was
20 manager for the Four Star Quartet gospel group when he was hired
21 by WROX radio station manager Buck Hinman; and

22 WHEREAS, in 1947, Wright became the first black disc jockey
23 in Mississippi when he went to work in WROX Radio, and until his
24 retirement in 1998, he hosted one of America's longest
25 continuous-running radio shows and interviewed many celebrities
26 during his 51-year career, including Elvis Presley, Muddy Waters,

27 B. B. King, Bobby Rush, Ike and Tina Turner, Sonny Boy Williamson,
28 Robert Nighthawk, Little Milton, Pinesap Perkins, Ruffs Thomas and
29 Charley Pride; and

30 WHEREAS, considered a beacon and snappy dresser in the
31 homogenized world of glib broadcast personalities and talk shows,
32 Early was profiled frequently by the national media including CBS,
33 ABC and CNN television, The Washington Post, Los Angeles Times and
34 the Atlanta Journal Constitution; and

35 WHEREAS, in 1988, Wright was honored at a banquet with the
36 establishment of the Early Wright Scholarship at the Center for
37 the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi,
38 where the center's founding director "Blues Doctor" William Ferris
39 led the establishment of the scholarship fund which memorialized
40 one of Mississippi's great musical legacies; later during a Black
41 History Month ceremony at Ole Miss, Wright and James Earl Jones
42 were recognized as outstanding black Mississippians; and revered
43 as the Sunflower River Blues Association's symbolic leader, the
44 association honored Wright by naming its highest honor the Early
45 Wright Heritage Award presented for preserving, promoting,
46 perpetuating and documenting blues; and

47 WHEREAS, surviving him are his wife, seven grandchildren, all
48 of Clarksdale, two sisters, and two brothers; and it is with great
49 pride that we remember the life of one of Mississippi's most
50 distinguished African-Americans:

51 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
52 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That
53 we do hereby commend the life of Clarksdale's legendary disc
54 jockey Early Wright and express the sympathy of the Legislature on
55 his passing.

56 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
57 the family of Early Wright and be made available to the Capitol
58 Press Corps.