

By: Simmons, Jordan, Horhn

To: Rules

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 63
(As Adopted by Senate)

1 A RESOLUTION TO COMMEND THE LIFE OF SAM BLOCK, AND TO EXTEND
2 THE SYMPATHY OF THE LEGISLATURE TO HIS FAMILY UPON HIS PASSING.

3 WHEREAS, Sam Block rejected the racially segregated norm of
4 the 1950's and embraced the fledgling civil rights movement, a
5 dangerous and defiant act for a black Southerner at that time; and

6 WHEREAS, he began to work in the movement under his mentor in
7 Cleveland, Amzie Moore, who convinced him to go to work full time
8 for a new civil rights organization, the Student Non-Violent
9 Coordinating Committee (SNCC); and

10 WHEREAS, he enrolled at Mississippi Valley State University
11 in Itta Bena in 1961, but was expelled for civil rights activity,
12 and that same year received his first SNCC assignment: Greenwood,
13 home of the White Citizen's Council; and

14 WHEREAS, in Greenwood, Block began efforts to organize the
15 black community, focusing primarily on voter registration; and

16 WHEREAS, with no transportation other than his own two feet,
17 he walked the African-American community in search of citizens who
18 would get involved in the movement; and

19 WHEREAS, his efforts placed him in direct conflict with white
20 Delta citizens who were dedicated to the preservation of the
21 status quo; and

22 WHEREAS, over the next two years, Sam Block faced one
23 challenge after another, often sleeping in cars in order not to
24 endanger the lives of anyone who dared to house him; and

25 WHEREAS, he received death threats and beatings and was
26 jailed for trumped-up offenses; and

27 WHEREAS, in spite of the personal danger, Block continued his
28 work, leading efforts to bring food to Leflore County to
29 distribute to poor people; and

30 WHEREAS, he subsequently left Mississippi, moving to
31 California to establish residence in Los Angeles where he remained
32 active in civil rights, fund-raising and giving speeches around
33 the country, and never giving up hope that one day his native
34 Mississippi would change and embrace all citizens regardless of
35 race; and

36 WHEREAS, the life's work of Sam Block to attempt to create a
37 society where equal opportunity exists for all races has had a
38 direct effect on our country, and because of men and women like
39 Sam Block, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed and the
40 election of men and women of color to public office is now a
41 common and unremarkable event; and

42 WHEREAS, Mississippi is now a better place today because of
43 Sam Block and the men and women who worked with him to right
44 racial injustice, often at great cost of physical and emotional
45 suffering, or even death; and

46 WHEREAS, Sam Block died April 13, 2000, at the age of 60 in
47 Los Angeles:

48 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MISSISSIPPI STATE
49 SENATE, That we do hereby take this opportunity to mourn the
50 passing of one of the great civil rights workers and leaders, Sam
51 Block, to commend his life and the work to which he devoted his
52 life, to pay tribute to his courage, and to memorialize a
53 remarkable man and celebrate victory over a dark side of our
54 racial past.

55 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be
56 presented to his sister, Margaret, and to the Capitol Press Corps.