A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING WORLD WAR II VETERAN AND FORMER STATE REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAM BRYANT RIDGWAY OF JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI, WHO FLEW 14 MISSIONS OVER GERMANY AS A B-24 BOMBER COMMAND PILOT.

WHEREAS, William Bryant Ridgway was born in Jackson, Mississippi, February 12, 1919, one of five children. He participated in the ROTC program at Jackson Central High School in his junior and senior years and graduated with the Class of 1936. He attended Millsaps College and was graduated from the University of Mississippi in 1940; and

WHEREAS, in 1940 he received his private pilot license through the Civilian Pilot Training Program in Jackson. On October 10, 1941, two months before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps and joined the Aviation Cadet Program at Maxwell Field in Montgomery, Alabama. After a month, he was transferred with the Aviation Cadet Class of 42-E to the Army's primary flying school at Decatur, Alabama. It was in Decatur on Sunday afternoon, December 7, 1941, he heard Pearl Harbor had been attacked by Japan and knew that he and his fellow cadets were in the Army Air Corps for the duration of the war; and

WHEREAS, upon completion of Primary Flying School, he was sent to Greenville for Basic Training in BT-13s; he graduated from basic training in Greenville March 14, 1942, and reported to Spence Field in Moultrie, Georgia, for advanced training in the AT-6 "Texan." He finished with 103 other pilots from Spence Field on May 20, 1942. The Air Force was in the middle of a huge
expansion program and desperately needed flight instructors. Of
the 103 graduates, 99 became instructors; and

WHEREAS, Ridgway was selected as a "Texan" instructor. He
completed AT-6 instructor school at Maxwell Field in June 1942 and
was assigned to instruct British cadets at Craig Field in Selma,
Alabama; and

WHEREAS, in October 1942 Ridgway was one of the instructors
sent to train fighter pilots in "Texans" at a new advanced single
engine flying school at Marianna, Florida. While there he
attended instrument training school in Bryan, Texas, and
instructed in Marianna until May 1944; and

WHEREAS, after instructing for nearly two years, he was sent
to Smyrna, Tennessee, for transition training in heavy four-engine
B-24 bombers (Liberators). He was now ordered to March Field,
Riverside, California, to pick up a crew and undergo further crew
training and on November 24, 1944, Ridgway left March Field for
Hamilton Field, San Francisco, for overseas assignment; and

WHEREAS, en route to England, he boarded the USS Vermont for
the trip to Liverpool, England, then by train to the 467th Bomb
Group, Eighth Air Force, at Rackheath, near Norwich, 90 miles
northeast of London. The base was about 20 miles from the English
Channel. He arrived at the 467th Headquarters on December 21,
1944, and flew his first combat mission to Koblenz, Germany, on
January 1, 1945, as a co-pilot; and

WHEREAS, because Ridgway had flown hundreds of hours as an
instructor and didn't come unglued in emergencies, he was soon
made a command pilot. Most of his 14 missions over Germany were
in that capacity; and

WHEREAS, Ridgway said he flew most of his missions at 25,000
feet where the temperature was 35 degrees below zero. B-24's were
neither pressurized nor heated, so the crew wore electric suits
and oxygen masks. They frequently had to break the ice that would
form in their masks from condensation from breathing; and
WHEREAS, his next assignment was Lowry Field in Denver where he picked up a new crew and got checked out in the B-29 heavy bombers. He was on standby to go to the South Pacific when the war with Japan ended; and

WHEREAS, after the war, Ridgway returned to Jackson and earned a law degree from the Jackson School of Law. He was engaged in the oil and real estate business and served in the Air Force Reserves; and

WHEREAS, he also served one four-year term in the Mississippi House of Representatives as Representative from Hinds and Yazoo Counties but did not seek reelection; and

WHEREAS, he served as President of the Jackson Junior Chamber of Commerce and as President of the Jackson Central Lions Club. He is a member of Galloway Memorial United Methodist Church and has served as lay leader and chairman of the board; and

WHEREAS, he is married to Mary Juanita Wallace of Canton and they are the parents of five children; and

WHEREAS, Ridgway said that after four years in the military he became convinced that our country should adopt the principle of "peace through strength, not for aggression but for defense." He believes in a strong military; and

WHEREAS, it is with great pride that we recognize one of Mississippi’s vanishing generation of World War II combat veterans, who brought honor to his community and to his state:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That we do hereby commend World War II veteran and former State Representative William Bryant Ridgway of Jackson, Mississippi, who flew 14 missions over Germany as a B-24 Bomber Command Pilot, and recognize his patriotic and dedicated service to the United States of America and to the State of Mississippi, and wish him and his family continued success in their future endeavors.
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be presented to Mr. Ridgway and his family and be made available to the Capitol Press Corps.