

By: Senator(s) Michel, Harden, Scoper, Lee

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 560

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE POSTHUMOUS INDUCTION
2 OF BERNARD BROWN "BLACKIE" BLACKWELL, INNOVATIVE AND CREATIVE
3 PLAYER, COACH AND SPORTS ADMINISTRATOR FROM SUCCESS, MISSISSIPPI,
4 INTO THE MISSISSIPPI SPORTS HALL OF FAME CLASS OF 2001.

5 WHEREAS, the Jackson Touchdown Club and Mississippi Sports
6 Hall of Fame have unveiled the Class of 2001 of the Mississippi
7 Sports Hall of Fame with induction ceremonies to be held on
8 Friday, March 23, 2001, in Jackson; and

9 WHEREAS, the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame Class of 2001
10 features induction of the late Bernard Brown "Blackie" Blackwell,
11 innovative and creative player, coach and sports administrator
12 from Success, Mississippi, whose sports career is a matter of
13 record: "Blackie" was born on a sheep farm in Success,
14 Mississippi; Coach Blackwell was the son of Mr. and Mrs. L.B.
15 Blackwell who are also deceased. Blackie's sports career spanned
16 nearly half a century. After graduating from Saucier High School,
17 Bernard attended Ole Miss and played left guard from 1944 through
18 1947; he is believed to be the first player to start every game
19 for four years at Ole Miss and he played under three head coaches:
20 Harry Mehre, Harold "Red" Drew and Johnny Vaught. Blackwell was a
21 hard-nosed player who gave no quarter on the field. He is
22 regarded as one of the toughest players to step on the gridiron
23 for the Rebels and earned his reputation as a blocker. Blackie
24 played in 1944 and 1945 under Harry Mehre and was then coached in
25 1946 by "Red" Drew. He was a senior on Johnny Vaught's first Ole
26 Miss team in 1947 that won the school's first SEC title with a 9-2
27 record. The Rebels lost only to Vanderbilt in Nashville and
28 Arkansas in Memphis during 1947. In the season opening 14-7 win
29 over Kentucky in Oxford, Blackwell played one of his finest games
30 and was named the SEC Lineman of the Week. Blackie was also one
31 of the stars in the landmark Ole Miss 43-12 win over Tennessee in
32 Memphis, the first time the Rebels had beaten the Vols.
33 Blackwell's teammates included legendary Ole Miss names such as
34 Charlie Conerly, Dixie Howell and Barney Poole. Blackie played in
35 the 1948 Delta Bowl in Memphis as the Rebs capped off their
36 championship season by defeating TCU by a 13-9 score. His play in
37 1947 earned Blackwell a spot on Mississippi State's All Opponent
38 Team. Blackie was selected to the New Orleans Times Picayune All
39 America Team and he was also chosen for several All SEC teams. In
40 addition to football, Coach Blackwell also was a member of the
41 Rebel track team from 1944 to 1946, and the Ole Miss basketball

42 team from 1944 to 1945. He served as vice president of the M Club
43 from 1945 to 1946 and was president of the Health and Physical
44 Education Club for two years. Invited to play in the 1947 Blue
45 Gray Game in Montgomery, Alabama, Bernard instead signed a
46 professional football contract with the New York Giants in early
47 1948. He shocked many friends and family when he opted to enter
48 the coaching profession. At the tender age of 21, Blackwell
49 became the youngest head football coach in the nation at the
50 junior college level when he was named as the football mentor at
51 Northwest Junior College in Senatobia. After two seasons at
52 Northwest, Coach Blackwell was hired as head football and track
53 coach at West Tallahatchie High School in Webb, Mississippi. From
54 1950 to 1956, he led West Tallahatchie to football and track
55 district championships. In 1952, he was selected as an assistant
56 All Star coach in the Mississippi High School All Star football
57 game, the first year high school coaches were allowed to coach
58 rather than college coaches. The year 1954 was a milestone year
59 for Coach Blackwell as he was named Coach of the Year by the Delta
60 Valley Conference. He also used his sports administration talents
61 to help form the Mississippi Association of Coaches (MAC), an
62 organization that he devoted his life to during and after his
63 coaching career. He was chosen as a member of the MAC's Board of
64 Directors until 1963, when he was named as Executive Director. He
65 guided the MAC from 1963 until 1991, an amazing 28 years of
66 dedication to the group that is one of the leading coaching
67 associations in America. The year 1954 was also the season in
68 which Coach Blackwell made his West Tallahatchie team scrimmage at
69 half time when they played poorly in the first half during a
70 Thanksgiving Day game with Batesville High School. In 1956, Coach
71 Blackwell left West Tallahatchie to become assistant football
72 coach and head baseball coach at Greenville High School. The
73 Greenville athletic program was one of the best in the South in
74 the old Big Eight Conference. With Blackie on the sidelines,
75 Greenville won the 1957 and 1958 Big Eight football titles. His
76 baseball teams won two district, two North Mississippi and two
77 American Legion District crowns. Coach Blackwell departed the
78 Delta after the 1958 season as he was hired as head football coach
79 on the Coast at Pascagoula High. Just one season later, Blackie
80 arrived at Mississippi College in Clinton where he served as
81 assistant football coach and Associate Professor of Education.
82 The Choctaws improved in one season from 0-8 in 1958 to 7-2 in
83 1959, partly due to Blackie's no-nonsense style of coaching and
84 discipline. Mississippi College and Clinton would soon become his
85 adopted home as he spent the rest of his career on or around the
86 Choctaw campus. Blackwell soon settled into his two passions in
87 life--working at Mississippi College and serving as Executive
88 Director of the MAC. Blackie's first increased membership in the
89 organization to effectively carry out new proposals and fresh
90 ideas. Membership in the MAC grew from 300 in 1963, when he took
91 over as Executive Director, to nearly 2,000 plus. The loyalty of
92 Blackwell to his coaching brethren was a key to the MAC's
93 unprecedented growth. He also solicited and received corporate
94 sponsorships for MAC and related events, thus broadening the
95 financial base of the group. His hands-on innovative style
96 surfaced while molding the future of the MAC. Under his
97 leadership, the MAC created programs that had not been seen in
98 other coaching associations in the nation. The MAC adopted and
99 funded a Memorial Athletic Benefit and Permanent Disability Plan

100 which has paid off temporary and permanent disability plus death
101 claims. The MAC established the first athletic training workshop
102 for high school and college students in the United States. The
103 association also supported the adoption of a program to determine
104 state championships in high school football and established a
105 permanent job and coaching career file for coaches. Coach
106 Blackwell and the MAC established a Coaches Hall of Fame, which
107 held its first class induction in 1973, and is an annual MAC
108 event. He served as Chairman of the MAC Hall of Fame Selection
109 Committee. In addition to the Hall of Fame, an entire award
110 program was created for high school and junior college coaches for
111 all sports. The MAC under Blackie expanded football and
112 basketball clinics and added baseball, softball, soccer, track,
113 cross-county, tennis and athletic administration. The group
114 sponsored and supported educational programs in sports medicine,
115 nutrition, drug abuse and athletic training and also established
116 the first college credit program for clinic attendance on a
117 statewide level. Cross-country running was adopted by the
118 Mississippi High School Activities Association at the urging of
119 Blackwell and his legion of coaches. The MAC, under Coach
120 Blackwell, assumed sponsorship of the All Star Football,
121 Basketball, Softball and Soccer games. The association lobbied
122 the Mississippi Legislature for an indoor track facility for the
123 Mississippi Coliseum and for funding of the Governor's Council on
124 Physical Fitness and Sports. Coach Blackwell and the MAC
125 supported efforts to have Mississippi adopt the "no pass--no play"
126 rule for academic and athletic eligibility. With the support of
127 the MAC, he also chaired a committee to establish "National
128 Coaches Day." Coach Blackwell's influence spread nationally as he
129 was a charter member in 1965 of the National High School Athletic
130 Coaches Association and served on that group's Board of Directors
131 from 1980 to 1986. He served as Chairman on the State Coaches
132 Association of Executive Secretaries for a five-year term and
133 helped establish the first college credit program for clinic
134 attendance on a national level, similar to what he had
135 accomplished for Mississippi. In the late 1980's, Coach Blackwell
136 continued to promote and highlight athletic events as he was the
137 Mississippi Chairman to create the Mississippi/Alabama Shrine
138 All-Star Football Game which is annually played in Mobile,
139 Alabama, to benefit the Shriners Burned and Crippled Children
140 Program. The game recently celebrated its 13th anniversary. He
141 negotiated the contract for the Mississippi/Alabama All-Star
142 Basketball Game to be played on a home and home basis. The
143 Mississippi/Alabama hoops contest recently celebrated its 10th
144 anniversary. Without a doubt, Coach Bernard Blackwell has made a
145 permanent mark on the history of Mississippi athletics. In 1994,
146 the Mississippi High School All-Star Game, once operated by the
147 Jackson Touchdown Club and now sponsored solely by the MAC, was
148 named after Coach Blackwell posthumously. Behind the scenes,
149 Blackie made major changes in athletics administration and forged
150 strong bonds between coaches, players, fans and families of all
151 athletic phases. In 1972, when his coaching and teaching days
152 came to a close at Mississippi College, the school named him
153 assistant to the President. In 1976, he was chosen as National
154 Director of Alumni Affairs for Mississippi College, a position he
155 held until his death in 1993. During his 12-year tenure as
156 Director of the MC Annual Fund, the number of contributors more
157 than doubled and donations increased from \$150 Thousand Dollars to

158 more than \$1 Million Dollars annually. Coach Blackwell was the
159 coordinator of the committee to build Moody Adams Field House and
160 Robinson-Hale Stadium, facilities still in active use today.
161 Similar to the MAC, Blackie established the Mississippi College
162 Sports Hall of Fame along with an endowment fund and the Hillman
163 College--MP&L Berry Endowed Scholarship. He served as secretary
164 and advisor for the MC Booster Club and coordinated the first ever
165 All-Star cheerleader clinics. The cheerleader clinics are now
166 nationally known at MC and have an annual attendance well above
167 500. Coach Blackwell had a number of professional, civic and
168 religious affiliations. He was a member of the Clinton United
169 Methodist Church where he served as a lay leader of the Jackson
170 District. He was a three-term Chairman of the church's
171 administrative board, was President of Methodist Men and was the
172 Superintendent of Sunday School. Blackie also belonged to the
173 Morrison Heights Baptist Church where he worked for two years as
174 Chairman of the church's building and grounds. He was President
175 of the PTA at Clinton High School, a member of the Clinton Chamber
176 of Commerce, and served a term, from 1962 to 1963, as President of
177 the Clinton Youth Council. Coach Blackwell also assisted in
178 establishing the first Magnolia State Games, now played in
179 Meridian, through his relationship with the Governor's Council on
180 Physical Fitness and Sports, a group he helped organize. He was a
181 member of the Central Mississippi Chapter of the National Football
182 Foundation and Hall of Fame and was Vice President of this group
183 from 1984 through 1986. Coach Blackwell has received numerous
184 Distinguished Service Awards from various groups such as the
185 Clinton Chamber of Commerce (1965), the National High School
186 Athletic Coaches Association (1969 and 1973) and the MAC (1976).
187 He was honored with the Contribution to Amateur Football Award by
188 the Central Mississippi Chapter of the NFFHOF in 1973 and was the
189 Clinton Chamber of Commerce Man of the Year in 1962. The Clinton
190 Junior Chamber of Commerce bestowed upon him the Mississippi
191 Sportsman of the Year Award in 1971. Mississippi College has
192 presented Coach Blackwell with a number of distinctions including
193 the National Alumni Association's Certificate of Appreciation in
194 1984, the National M Club's Certificate of Appreciation in 1985,
195 and the prestigious 1991 Order of the Golden Arrow which is
196 awarded to a non-alumnus for outstanding professional achievement,
197 exceptional performance and leadership. In 1987, the National
198 High School Athletic Coaches Association honored Blackie once
199 again with the group's highest award they can present: the Dwight
200 Keith Award. During his lifetime, Bernard received honors and
201 accolades for distinguished service and sportsmanship on 14
202 different occasions from 11 separate organizations. With his
203 MSHOF induction, this is the third Hall of Fame membership for
204 Coach Blackwell. He was inducted into the MAC Coaches Hall of
205 Fame in 1980 and the Mississippi College Athletic Hall of Fame in
206 1991, ironically, two of the Halls of Fame he helped to create.
207 Coach Blackwell was known as a showman, gentleman and communicator
208 of the highest order. His public appearance at banquets and other
209 formal events are memorable for his colorful sports jackets,
210 particularly the familiar bright yellow gold Mississippi College
211 Alumni Blazer. His spirit was always upbeat as he provided class
212 dignity to any enterprise, game, banquet, event or any other
213 activity in which he was involved. Coach Blackwell is survived by
214 his wife, the former Mary Catherine Holston. He and Catherine
215 have five sons: Bernard "Bernie" Blackwell, Jr., who lives in

216 Magee; Doug Blackwell, an assistant track coach to Joe Walker at
217 Ole Miss; Jim Blackwell, who lives in Vermont; Hal Blackwell, who
218 resides in Florence; and Sid Blackwell, who lives in Connecticut.
219 They also have 17 grandchildren and one great grandchild; and

220 WHEREAS, it is with great pride that we recognize the memory
221 of this outstanding athlete and coach who brought honor to the
222 State of Mississippi:

223 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
224 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That
225 we do hereby recognize the Posthumous Induction of Bernard
226 "Blackie" Blackwell into the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame Class
227 of 2001, and send the Legislature's respect to his family on this
228 occasion.

229 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be
230 presented to the family of "Blackie" Blackwell at induction
231 ceremonies and be made available to the Capitol Press Corps.