SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 17

A RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE CIVIC AND CHARITABLE
CONTRIBUTIONS OF JONNIE IRMA BENSON RILEY OF NEW HEBRON, LAWRENCE
COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI.

WHEREAS, Jonnie Irma Benson Riley was born June 30, 1907, in
Lawrence County, Mississippi, unto Lola Shows Benson and C. Floyd
Benson; and

WHEREAS, she finished New Hebron High School at the age of 15
with highest honors and was an honor student at Women's College in
Hattiesburg; and

WHEREAS, she married Vernon L. Riley of New Hebron on October
3, 1928 (Vernon passed away December 10, 1968), and they are the
parents of five children (three girls and two boys), 17
grandchildren, 44 great grandchildren and one great-great
grandchild; and

WHEREAS, she taught Sunday School for 40 years and served as
a pianist for 35 years, and has been an active member of the
Baptist Church for 80 years; and

WHEREAS, she has been past President of the local PTA, member
of Evergreen Garden Club, sponsor of Acteens and Girl Reserve
organizations, and President of the Fifth Area YWCA; and

WHEREAS, during her 52 years as a member of Mississippi
Federation of Women's Club, she attended the 50th Anniversary
Celebration as State President, presided over the 75th Celebration
and was an active participant in the 100th Celebration; and

WHEREAS, under her Federation leadership, New Hebron
installed streetlights, lights in the cemetery, street names and
markers, and house numbers; and won a second place award in
General Federation. She was instrumental in fundraising for the
town public library. She is the only charter member of New Hebron
Club still active in Federation work; and

WHEREAS, she served on the ETV Board of Directors; when the
ETV Bill was seriously in jeopardy of failing, she joined other
club women in making phone calls, sending telegrams and personal
visits to the Legislators; and

WHEREAS, she donated land on Main Street of New Hebron for
construction of the City Hall and the Fire Station; and provided
land for a city park to be furbished by local civic groups; and

WHEREAS, she served on the Mississippi Status of Women's
Commission, appointed by Governor William Waller; and

WHEREAS, she was a member of Citizens Control of Federal
Spending during the term of President Richard Nixon; and

WHEREAS, she has been a member of the Order of the Easter
Star (OES) since 1933. Serving as Worthy Matron several times,
was Secretary for 20 years and served in several other offices of
the local order. On the state level, she served as District
Deputy Grand Matron, Grand Organist, and in 1955, was elected
Worthy Grand Matron of Mississippi OES. She concluded her term by
presiding over the Golden Anniversary Session Grand Chapter held
in Jackson, Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, she served on the International Temple Committee of
General Chapter from 1973 through 1976, and has attended General
Grand Chapter consecutively since the 1949 Session held in
Toronto, Canada. She was presented a Certificate of Appreciation
from the Mississippi and General Chapter at the 1999 meeting in
Detroit, Michigan; and

WHEREAS, she served as Chairman of the Ritual Committee, the
Jurisprudence Committee and the Hospitality Committee on the State
level in OES; and
WHEREAS, she served on the Board of Trustees of the Rob
Morris Little Red School House for five years, and was Chairman
when the Caretakers Residence was built; and
WHEREAS, it is with great pride that we recognize the
uninterrupted civic leadership and charitable contributions of
this great lady who has brought honor to her community and to the
State of Mississippi:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby commend the civic and charitable
contributions of Jonnie Irma Benson Riley of New Hebron, Lawrence
County, Mississippi, as an example to all citizens of Mississippi,
and wish her continued success in her future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
Jonnie Irma Benson Riley and her family, and be made available to
the Capitol Press Corps.