

By: Representative Flaggs

To: Rules

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 88

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE LIFE, LEGACY AND
2 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE LEGENDARY VICKSBURG NAACP LEADER GEORGE LEE
3 JEFFERSON IN RECOGNITION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF BROWN VERSUS
4 BOARD OF EDUCATION.

5 WHEREAS, after the United States Supreme Court's ruling in
6 *Brown v. Board of Education* on May 17, 1954, George Lee Jefferson,
7 one of Mississippi's wealthiest black men, equipped with his faith
8 in the United States Constitution, sought to ensure Mississippi's
9 immediate compliance with the recent decision; and

10 WHEREAS, the favorite nephew and heir of turn-of-the-century
11 philanthropist, businesswoman and civil rights crusader, Lucy C.
12 Jefferson, George Jefferson was the owner and manager of the
13 historic W.H. Jefferson Funeral Home, Chairman of the Vicksburg
14 Branch NAACP and one of three Mississippi National Republican
15 Committeemen; and

16 WHEREAS, Jefferson, who was equipped with a social conscience
17 and a courageous talent for leadership in the political process,
18 was a prominent driving force for progress in Vicksburg and was
19 very adept at guiding the 1,200 registered black voters of Warren
20 County to political respectability by using their bloc vote to
21 swing local elections in their favor; and

22 WHEREAS, only 12 days after the Court's *Brown* ruling, NAACP
23 leaders statewide announced their plan to submit petitions and
24 letters to all school districts demanding compliance with the
25 ruling to integrate public schools; and

26 WHEREAS, faced with the stonewalling tactics of high-ranking
27 state elected officials, Jefferson committed himself to the cause,
28 refusing to yield any ground on black people's Constitutional

29 rights, in conjunction with NAACP Lead Counsel Thurgood Marshall,
30 and filed one of the first petitions in the country calling for an
31 end to segregation in a local school district; and

32 WHEREAS, in late March 1954, Jefferson announced his
33 candidacy for a seat on the Vicksburg Board of Education, and was
34 one of only two candidates to qualify, but was prevented from
35 seeking the election by a piece of unconstitutional local and
36 private legislation proposed by two Warren County legislators; and

37 WHEREAS, prior to allowing his life to become dominated by
38 *Brown v. Board of Education*, Jefferson had secured a credit line
39 that scaled into the millions for his dream of developing
40 top-of-the-line housing for Vicksburg's emerging black
41 middle-class; and

42 WHEREAS, engulfed by his other life goal of public school
43 integration in Mississippi, Jefferson, who endured death threats,
44 cross burnings and threats to his business establishment, was
45 barred by the banks from using any of the money in his credit
46 accounts, and was ultimately reduced to abject poverty; and

47 WHEREAS, very few Mississippians know the story of George L.
48 Jefferson, who died in 1961, never seeing either of his dreams
49 come into fruition, and of his Aunt Lucy, whose good works
50 impacted the entire state; and

51 WHEREAS, Oakley Training School, Cedar Grove Home for the
52 Aged, the Mississippi State Conference of Federated Colored
53 Women's Clubs, NAACP respectability in Mississippi, pre-civil
54 rights era voting rights for black people and the challenges to
55 the segregated school system, all were real-world achievements of
56 the Jeffersons and their cohorts across Mississippi; and

57 WHEREAS, it is the policy of this Legislature to recognize
58 and commend works of notable Mississippians, such as the life and
59 legacy of George Lee Jefferson, whose commitment to securing
60 equality and a better means of living for black Mississippians was

61 monumental in bringing about a social transformation in this
62 state:

63 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
64 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE SENATE CONCURRING
65 THEREIN, That we do hereby commend the life and legacy of
66 legendary Vicksburg NAACP leader and businessman, George Lee
67 Jefferson, upon the 50th anniversary of the United States Supreme
68 Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

69 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
70 furnished to the Vicksburg Branch NAACP, the immediate survivors
71 of George L. Jefferson and to the members of the Capitol Press
72 Corps.