

By: Senator(s) Dearing, Bryan, Burton,
Butler, Frazier, Jackson (15th), Little,
Posey, Dawkins

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 509

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF
2 PUBLIC SERVICE OF FORMER STATE SENATOR TROY WATKINS FROM NATCHEZ,
3 MISSISSIPPI, AND EXPRESSING THE SYMPATHY OF THE LEGISLATURE ON HIS
4 PASSING.

5 WHEREAS, Troy Watkins, a former Natchez mayor and State
6 Senator who left a lasting impact on higher education in the State
7 of Mississippi, died on Friday, September 12, 2003; and

8 WHEREAS, Senator Watkins, 77, was instrumental in
9 establishing the Natchez campus of Copiah-Lincoln Community
10 College, which now shares land with Alcorn State University.
11 Senator Watkins and his wife, Margaret, were the parents of five
12 children, including David Watkins, a longtime legislative
13 representative of public school districts; and

14 WHEREAS, Senator Watkins was a 30-year old newcomer to
15 Natchez when he was elected the city's youngest mayor in 1956.
16 The son of a Methodist minister, he had grown up in different
17 Mississippi towns and held his bachelor's and master's degrees in
18 history from Millsaps College and the University of Mississippi,
19 respectively. He was particularly interested in the War Between
20 the States and great southern generals and leaders; and

21 WHEREAS, Senator Watkins served as a very progressive mayor
22 until 1964, but his political career did not end there. He ran
23 for State Senator and served from 1972 to 1980, and Senator
24 Watkins ran two strong races for Lieutenant Governor; and

25 WHEREAS, Senator Watkins was very dogmatic and was not afraid
26 to take on political battles against some of the more powerful
27 members of the State Senate; and

28 WHEREAS, perhaps Senator Watkins' most lasting impact on
29 Natchez was the role he played to establish the Copiah-Lincoln
30 campus. The University of Southern Mississippi had been granted
31 permission to establish a two-year program for third- and
32 fourth-year students, and Senator Watkins lobbied to establish a
33 community college branch to help round out the campus. He
34 enlisted several community leaders to invest in the property,
35 which was later purchased by the state. In 1999, Copiah-Lincoln
36 Community College recognized his 27 years of service by dedicating
37 the Vo-Tech Center in Natchez in his honor; and

38 WHEREAS, education remained an important focus for Senator
39 Watkins later in life. "Our future is in education," Watkins told
40 The Natchez Democrat in early 2002. "It costs money to educate
41 our children, but it cost five times as much to keep them in the
42 penitentiary." Even after he served in office, Senator Watkins
43 was interested in community affairs, including economic
44 development. He worked hard to keep industrial development an
45 important issue; and

46 WHEREAS, it is with sadness that we note the passing of this
47 dedicated public servant, who was devoted to his family, his
48 church, his community and to the State of Mississippi:

49 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
50 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That
51 we do hereby commend the life and legacy of public service of
52 former State Senator Troy Watkins from Natchez, Mississippi, and
53 express to his surviving family the sympathy of the Legislature on
54 his passing.

55 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
56 Senator Troy Watkins' wife, Margaret; children Dr. Troy Watkins,
57 Jr., David, Margaret, Paul and Carole; to the Mayor of Natchez,
58 Mississippi; be made available to The Natchez Democrat; and to
59 members of the Capitol Press Corps.