

By: Representatives Fillingane, Franks,
Moak, Upshaw, Snowden, Rogers (61st), Smith
(59th), Weathersby, Baker (74th), Moore,
Reeves, Stevens

To: Rules

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 95

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING JUDGE MARY LIBBY PAYNE
2 ACKNOWLEDGING HER MANY CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MISSISSIPPI LEGAL
3 PROFESSION AS A LEGENDARY LAWYER.

4 WHEREAS, in a career spanning approximately 50 years, Mary
5 Libby Payne has served Mississippi and its legal community in many
6 outstanding capacities, overcoming many adversarial prejudices to
7 reach the pinnacle of her profession; and

8 WHEREAS, born in 1932, the daughter of well-known attorney
9 and five-term State Legislator, Reece Bickerstaff and wife, Emily,
10 and the granddaughter of Joseph Anderson Cook, the first President
11 of Mississippi Normal College--better known today as the
12 University of Southern Mississippi--and State Senator, Judge Payne
13 was destined to achieve greatness by filling the shoes of her
14 devout and precocious predecessors; and

15 WHEREAS, excelling in high school, Judge Payne attended
16 Mississippi State College for Women for two years before
17 transferring to Ole Miss, where she earned her degree in political
18 science with distinction in 1954; and

19 WHEREAS, graduating at the top of her class from Ole Miss Law
20 School in 1955, one of three women, Judge Payne's academic success
21 earned her the opportunity to serve as Casenote Editor for the
22 *Mississippi Law Journal*, as well as Chair of the Moot Court Board;
23 and

24 WHEREAS, Judge Payne began her law practice immediately after
25 graduation as a partner in her father's firm in Gulfport,
26 Mississippi, and subsequently worked for Henley, Jones and Henley
27 before beginning her own practice in 1963; and

28 WHEREAS, in 1964, Judge Payne was hired as legislative
29 draftsman by Walter Sillers, then Speaker of the Mississippi House
30 of Representatives, working zealously in addition to maintaining
31 her private practice until 1968 before being appointed as

32 Executive Director of the newly created Judiciary Commission and
33 subsequently, chief of drafting and research for the House; and

34 WHEREAS, in 1972, Judge Payne received an appointment to
35 serve as Assistant Attorney General, a capacity she fulfilled
36 until 1975, when she became the founding Dean of the Mississippi
37 College School of Law; and

38 WHEREAS, Judge Payne stepped down as dean in 1978 to become a
39 full-time professor, continuing in that position until 1994, when
40 she took a giant leap of faith by running for the newly-created
41 Mississippi Court of Appeals, which she won in the second primary;
42 and

43 WHEREAS, Judge Payne's passion for hard work was well matched
44 to the new court's task of helping to clear the vast backlog of
45 cases on appeal and merited her a second term on the Court of
46 Appeals in 1999; and

47 WHEREAS, having retired in 2001 from the bench, Judge Payne
48 has imparted her infinite wisdom, expertise and proficiency to The
49 Mississippi Bar by serving in various capacities on the
50 association's internal committees; and

51 WHEREAS, having memberships in many elite and distinguished
52 professional and civic organizations such as the American
53 Judicature Society, Scribes, Christian Legal Society, St. Jude's
54 Catholic Day Care Center, Women's Cabinet for Public Affairs and
55 the Mississippi University for Women's Board of Alumnae
56 Association; and

57 WHEREAS, Judge Payne's illustrious career has afforded her
58 the opportunity to be recognized and honored with many prestigious
59 accolades, including: Who's Who of American Women, Who's Who in
60 South and Southwest, Outstanding Young Women of America, Who's Who

61 in American Law, Mississippi University for Women's Medallion of
62 Excellence; Mississippi College Lawyer of the Year, Lifetime
63 Achievement Award, Distinguished Jurist Award and Book of Golden
64 Deeds Award; and

65 WHEREAS, in the lighter years of her retirement, Judge Payne
66 continues to share her knowledge with the legal community in
67 addition to spending quality time with those closest to her who
68 have supported her every endeavor, her family: husband of almost
69 50 years, Bobby R. Payne; sons, Reece Allen and Glenn Russell; and
70 grandchildren; and

71 WHEREAS, it is with great pride that we recognize Judge Payne
72 who has served the State of Mississippi with distinction as a
73 legal ambassador for people, bringing honor and integrity to the
74 legal profession, her family, home community, region and state:

75 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
76 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE SENATE CONCURRING
77 THEREIN, That we do hereby commend the career, contributions and
78 achievements of Judge Mary Libby Payne as a just adjudicator and a
79 legendary lawyer and extend to her our best wishes for success in
80 all her future endeavors.

81 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
82 furnished to Judge Mary Libby Payne and to the members of the
83 Capitol Press Corps.