

By: Representative Stevens

To: Rules

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 32

1 A RESOLUTION COMMENDING LEONARD'S DEPARTMENT STORE IN
2 KOSCIUSKO ON THE OCCASION OF ITS 100TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION.

3 WHEREAS, in 1905, Will Leonard and Cayce Fleming embarked on
4 a business venture that would span 100 years through a historical
5 landscape that included two world wars and the Great Depression;
6 and

7 WHEREAS, Leonard's Department Store is the outgrowth of these
8 two men's venture, and recently celebrated its 100th anniversary;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, one of three sons of Mary Comfort and Charles Henry
11 Leonard, Will Leonard, at the age of 13, persuaded his mother to
12 allow him to assume full responsibility for the family after his
13 father's death and the family move to Kosciusko; and

14 WHEREAS, having made the decision, equipped with only an
15 eighth-grade education, Will began his career in the retail
16 business as an employee of W.W. Wilson and Company, where over the
17 next several years he learned the "nuts and bolts" of the retail
18 business; and

19 WHEREAS, by late 1905, he was ready to launch a new venture
20 in partnership with Cayce Fleming, jointly purchasing the entire
21 stock of W.W. Wilson, and beginning their new firm, Leonard and
22 Fleming; and

23 WHEREAS, Billy Leonard, Will's son and successor in the
24 business, witnessed the business undergo major changes and rapid
25 growth during the 1950s and 1960s before seizing the reins upon
26 his father's retirement; and

27 WHEREAS, under Billy's guidance and business savvy, Leonard's
28 continued to grow, adding a Bargain Basement and completely
29 renovating into a full service department store, which ultimately
30 required additional space, when in 1974, Billy acquired the
31 adjacent corner property from the Munson estate, allowing the
32 store to successfully double its size; and

33 WHEREAS, in 1985, after 40 years in the retail business Billy
34 Leonard retired, selling to Bernard Russell, who was later joined
35 by Tom Battles as a stockholder; and

36 WHEREAS, in 1993, Allen Massey joined Russell and Battles as
37 a stockholder, and in 1999, Allen and Margaret Massey purchased
38 Leonard's from Russell and Battles, joined shortly thereafter by
39 Jay Price as a stockholder; and

40 WHEREAS, in 2003, the Bargain Basement became an outdoor
41 hunting store known as "The Soggy Bottom," which was later taken
42 over in 2004 by new stockholder, Shaun Blaylock; and

43 WHEREAS, it is the policy of the House of Representatives to
44 recognize and commend such outstanding business institutions as
45 Leonard's Department Store, which has continued to serve a broad
46 customer base and still enjoys a reputation for excellence in
47 Kosciusko and surrounding areas:

48 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
49 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby
50 commend Leonard's Department Store in Kosciusko on its 100th
51 anniversary and wish them well in future years.

52 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
53 furnished to the owners of Leonard's Department Store and to the
54 members of the Capitol Press Corps.