

By: Senator(s) Horhn, Harden, Williamson,
Dawkins, Jordan, Thomas, Butler, Jackson
(11th), Jackson (32nd), Turner, Simmons,
Frazier

To: Rules

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE
FOR
SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 543

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION REMEMBERING THE LEGACY OF THE LATE
2 CLYDE KENNARD, THE FIRST BLACK STUDENT TO APPLY FOR ADMITTANCE AT
3 THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI, FOR HIS SIGNIFICANT ROLE
4 IN THE HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY AND FOR HIS SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN
5 THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN MISSISSIPPI.

6 WHEREAS, on February 16, 1993, the University of Southern
7 Mississippi dedicated its Student Services Building in honor of
8 two African-Americans who played significant roles in the
9 university's history; and

10 WHEREAS, the dedication of Kennard-Washington Hall during a
11 special afternoon convocation paid tribute to the late Clyde
12 Kennard, a decorated Korean War veteran and farmer, who
13 unsuccessfully attempted to become the first African-American to
14 enroll at USM in 1959; (and to Alcorn State University President
15 Walter Washington, the first black to receive a doctorate from USM
16 in 1969); and

17 WHEREAS, "we are saying to the world that we apologize for
18 the indignities he (Kennard) suffered," USM President Aubrey K.
19 Lucas said during the dedication, which was a part of the
20 university's "Celebration of Diversity" and African-American
21 History Month activities on the Hattiesburg campus. Twenty-two
22 past and present black students, faculty and staff who achieved
23 "firsts" at USM over the years were recognized during that
24 ceremony, which included a special tribute to the memory of Clyde
25 Kennard from the Reverend John Webb, who was his brother-in-law;
26 and

27 WHEREAS, born in 1927, Kennard's early life foreshadowed a
28 grim future; at the age of 4, his father died. He grew up helping

29 his mother run the family farm. In 1950, Kennard began attending
30 college in Fayetteville, North Carolina, during the Korean War.
31 Kennard served as a paratrooper and rose to the rank of sergeant,
32 receiving three medals including the Bronze Star; and

33 WHEREAS, after the Korean War, he came home to run the family
34 farm in Mississippi, and the 28-year old joined the NAACP.
35 Kennard served as President of the local NAACP youth chapter and
36 he served on the local school board and was outraged the area's
37 125 black students had to travel 11 miles past the all-white
38 school to attend classes. He circulated an unsuccessful petition
39 to have children attend the closest school; and

40 WHEREAS, Kennard wanted to finish college and in 1956, he
41 approached President William D. McCain at the then segregated
42 Mississippi Southern College, but was denied. By the time he
43 tried to enroll again in 1958, he enjoyed the support of Medgar
44 Evers, Field Secretary for the Mississippi NAACP. When his
45 intention to attend college was made public, the state's
46 segregationist spy agency, the Mississippi Sovereignty Commission,
47 compiled an extensive dossier on the small-framed farmer; and

48 WHEREAS, when Clyde Kennard refused to give up his quest to
49 become the first black student to enroll at the University of
50 Southern Mississippi, authorities sent him to state prison in 1960
51 for seven years based upon a conviction for burglary; and

52 WHEREAS, on March 6, 1961, the Mississippi Supreme Court
53 ordered a new trial on reckless driving and liquor charges for
54 Kennard, but it did him little good. He remained behind bars,
55 where he'd been since his September 1960 burglary arrest. Less
56 than a month later, the same justices upheld Kennard's conviction,
57 sending him to the State Penitentiary at Parchman; and

58 WHEREAS, Clyde Kennard wrote a letter to the *Hattiesburg*
59 *American* in 1958 challenging the idea of separate but equal.
60 Kennard suggested people work together to build up one another:
61 "When merit replaces race as a factor in character evaluation, the

62 most heckling social problem of modern times will have been
63 solved"; and

64 WHEREAS, in March 1962, he underwent colon cancer surgery at
65 the University of Mississippi Medical Center. Kennard died July
66 4, 1963, the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence that
67 promised, "All men are created equal"; and

68 WHEREAS, *The Chicago Tribune* Editorial Board stated that the
69 1993 ceremony at USM renaming the Student Services Building after
70 Clyde Kennard was a significant event in the history of the civil
71 rights movement. "This institutional apology was delivered--not
72 out of a sense of guilt but out of a sense of
73 obligation"--representing a great breakthrough and healing process
74 for the United States of America and the State of Mississippi:

75 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
76 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That
77 we do hereby remember the legacy of the late Clyde Kennard, the
78 first black student to apply for admittance at the University of
79 Southern Mississippi, for his significant role in the history of
80 the university and for his significant role in the history of the
81 civil rights movement in Mississippi.

82 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution shall be
83 presented to the surviving family members of Clyde Kennard and be
84 made available to the Capitol Press Corps.