

By: Senator(s) Jackson (11th)

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 547

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE LIFE AND PUBLIC
2 SERVICE OF PAUL BATTLE, JR., LONGTIME SUPERVISOR OF TUNICA COUNTY,
3 WHOSE LEADERSHIP BROUGHT CASINO GAMING TO TUNICA COUNTY.

4 WHEREAS, Paul Battle Jr., 81, of Tunica, Mississippi, whose
5 leadership helped bring casino gaming to Tunica County, departed
6 this earthly life on November 14, 2005; and

7 WHEREAS, born June 11, 1924, in Arlington, Tennessee, "Mr.
8 Paul," as he was affectionately known, graduated from high school
9 in 1942 and immediately entered World War II in the Merchant
10 Marines. After the war, he attended Maritime Engineering School
11 in New Orleans in 1946, but left nautical engineering for farming
12 after a year. Battle often joked that he came to Mississippi
13 "flat-broke" after trying his hand at farming in Tennessee, but
14 after he came to Tunica County in the 1950s, first renting land
15 near Sarah and then buying 880 acres, which includes his
16 headquarters and the Battles' home, he and his devoted wife as
17 business partners quickly built a highly successful operation,
18 eventually farming thousands of acres of rice, soybeans, cotton
19 and catfish in Tunica County and in Costa Rica, where he once
20 owned a cattle ranch and a banana plantation; and

21 WHEREAS, Battle was one of the first Tunica Countians to try
22 catfish farming. He opened his first pond in 1969 and was a
23 principal in Pride of the Pond, the largest local catfish
24 processing plant. He also owned and operated a cotton gin, one of
25 only a few still in operation in Tunica County, and liked to joke
26 that he would have written on his epitaph, "*Caught up at the Gin*";
27 and

28 WHEREAS, but if farming was his life, Tunica County was
29 Battle's love. He was first elected to the County Board of
30 Supervisors in November, 1963, and took office on January 6, 1964,
31 to begin a 35-year tenure. On September 8, 1978, he was elected
32 President of that body and served in that capacity until his
33 retirement December 31, 1999. Battle was honored by the county
34 with a reception at the Courthouse on December 30, 1999, where
35 hundreds of Tunicans turned out to pay tribute to the legendary
36 leader. It was announced at the reception that Tunica County's
37 new multi-million dollar Arena and Exposition Center would be
38 named in his honor; and

39 WHEREAS, during his 35 years as a supervisor, Battle oversaw
40 a county whose economy turned lean, when agriculture, once
41 thriving, took a downturn during the 1980s. It was then, that
42 Battle's skills really shined; and

43 WHEREAS, Battle and the Board of Supervisors put Tunica
44 County among the first in Mississippi to adopt the unit system of
45 government. County officials were also quick to install a
46 purchase order system, but it was the board's vote in the early
47 1990s to allow casino gambling in Tunica County that brought the
48 rapid turnaround in county fortunes that has become known as the
49 "Tunica Miracle"; and

50 WHEREAS, Battle said in a featured story in *The Tunica Times*
51 in October 2002, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of
52 gaming, that he approved gaming because he was "sick and tired of
53 people saying that Tunica County is the poorest county in the
54 nation." In fact, unemployment in Tunica County, once as high as
55 26 percent, had declined to under three percent by the year of
56 2000. He told the story that Splash Casino pioneers drove up to
57 his house in 1991 and asked Battle to show them some place they
58 might put in a riverboat casino. The rest, as they say, is
59 history. Splash went on to earn millions of dollars and pave the

60 way for today's highly successful market, which now ranks third in
61 the nation; and

62 WHEREAS, for his role in bringing casinos, casino tax revenue
63 and phenomenal economic growth to Tunica County, Battle was
64 honored with the first Founder's Award in 2002, given by the local
65 Tourism Commission and Convention and Visitor's Bureau; and

66 WHEREAS, in addition to his leadership, Battle was known for
67 enjoying hunting and for qualities of loyalty, dedication,
68 dignity, integrity and humility. He has been described as "The
69 backbone of Tunica County leadership," "A great statesman (and) a
70 great leader," and "among the very best" of supervisors; and

71 WHEREAS, he is survived by his wife, Norma Hooker Battle;
72 three children, Paul Battle III and wife Marietta of Tunica, Lil
73 Battle Long and husband Henry Earl of Rosedale and Bill Battle and
74 wife Lynda of Tunica; a sister, Virginia Ann Battle of Memphis;
75 nine grandchildren, Allison Koestler of Memphis and Paul Battle
76 IV, Kate Taylor Battle, Caroline Battle, Houston Battle, Cooper
77 Battle, Betsy Battle and Battle Hamrick, all of Tunica, and Norma
78 Hamrick of Memphis and three great-grandchildren; and

79 WHEREAS, it is with sadness that we note the passing of this
80 model citizen whose leadership and contributions to his county and
81 to his state are a matter of record:

82 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
83 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That
84 we do hereby commend the life and public service of Paul Battle,
85 Jr., longtime supervisor of Tunica County, Mississippi, whose
86 leadership brought casino gaming to Tunica County.

87 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
88 the surviving family of Paul Battle, Jr., and the Tunica County
89 Board of Supervisors and be made available to the Capitol Press
90 Corps.