

## REPORT OF CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

**MR. SPEAKER AND MADAM PRESIDENT:**

We, the undersigned conferees, have had under consideration the amendments to the following entitled RESOLUTION:

H. C. No. 55: Remember legacy and restore reputation of the late Clyde Kennard.

We, therefore, respectfully submit the following report and recommendation:

1. That the Senate recede from its Amendment No. 1.
2. That the House and Senate adopt the following amendment:

Amend by striking all after line 6 and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

6 WHEREAS, Clyde Kennard, an African-American decorated war  
7 veteran and farmer, repeatedly tried to become known as the first  
8 black student to enroll at the University of Southern Mississippi  
9 (USM), but his false arrest is known by researchers as a sad event  
10 of the civil rights movement in Mississippi; and

11 WHEREAS, when Clyde Kennard refused to give up his quest to  
12 become the first black student to enroll at the University of  
13 Southern Mississippi, authorities sent him to state prison in 1960  
14 for seven years; and

15 WHEREAS, a three-month investigation by *The Clarion-Ledger*  
16 has revealed that the decorated Army veteran was locked up for a  
17 crime he never committed; and

18 WHEREAS, in the 1960 trial, 19-year-old Johnny Lee Roberts  
19 testified that Kennard, a 33-year-old devout Baptist and farmer,  
20 put him up to breaking into Forrest County Co-op to steal \$25.00  
21 in feed, even describing how he should leave the warehouse door  
22 unlocked; however, 45 years later, Roberts has said that none of  
23 his testimony was true, is willing to swear under oath that Clyde  
24 Kennard never put him up to the burglary, or asked him to do  
25 anything illegal; and

26           WHEREAS, born in 1927, Kennard's early life foreshadowed a  
27 grim future when, at the age of four, his father died. He grew up  
28 helping his mother run the family farm. In 1950, Kennard began  
29 attending college in Fayetteville, N.C., during the Korean War.  
30 Kennard served as a paratrooper and rose to the rank of sergeant,  
31 receiving three medals including the Bronze Star; and

32           WHEREAS, after the Korean War, he came home to run the family  
33 farm in Mississippi, and at the age of 28 joined the NAACP; and

34           WHEREAS, Kennard served as President of the local NAACP youth  
35 chapter and on the local school board; and

36           WHEREAS, after becoming aware that the area's 125 black  
37 students had to travel 11 miles past the all-white school to  
38 attend classes, Kennard became outraged and circulated an  
39 unsuccessful petition to have children attend the closest school;  
40 and

41           WHEREAS, Kennard desired to finish college and in 1956, he  
42 approached President William D. McCain at the then segregated  
43 Mississippi Southern College, but was denied entrance; however,  
44 when he tried to enroll again in 1958, he enjoyed the support of  
45 Medgar Evers, Field Secretary for the Mississippi NAACP and, when  
46 his intention to attend college was made public, the state's  
47 segregationist spy agency, the Mississippi Sovereignty Commission,  
48 compiled an extensive dossier on the small-framed farmer and  
49 sought to smear his reputation; authorities' framing of Kennard is  
50 made clear in Sovereignty Commission records; and

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

57           WHEREAS, in 1993, USM honored Kennard by renaming its student  
58 services building after him and Walter Washington, the first  
59 African-American to receive a doctorate from the institution, and  
60 a biography of Kennard on the university's Web site refers to the  
61 charges against Kennard as "false," but Mississippi never has  
62 taken any official action to clear his name; and

63           WHEREAS, Clyde Kennard wrote a letter to the *Hattiesburg*  
64 *American* in 1958 challenging the idea of separate but equal.  
65 Kennard suggested people work together to build up one another:  
66 "When merit replaces race as a factor in character evaluation, the  
67 most heckling social problem of modern times will have been  
68 solved"; and

69           WHEREAS, in March 1962, he underwent colon cancer surgery at  
70 the University of Mississippi Medical Center, but died July 4,  
71 1963, the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence that  
72 promised, "All men are created equal"; and

73           WHEREAS, the handling of Kennard's case was evidence of  
74 injustice in Mississippi's past history, and the reputation of  
75 this Mississippian deserves to be exonerated:

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

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

**Further, amend by striking the title in its entirety and  
inserting in lieu thereof the following:**

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

CONFEREES FOR THE HOUSE

X (SIGNED)  
Warren

X (SIGNED)  
Read

X (SIGNED)  
Robinson (63rd)

CONFEREES FOR THE SENATE

X (SIGNED)  
Little

X (SIGNED)  
Walls

X (SIGNED)  
Burton