

By: Senator(s) Dawkins, Gordon, Gollott, Horhn, Frazier, Simmons, Thomas, Harden, Morgan, Posey, Tollison, Hewes, Chaney, Butler, Jordan, Jackson (11th), Williamson, Turner To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 505

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE SYMPATHY OF THE
2 LEGISLATURE ON THE DEATH OF DR. GILBERT MASON, SR., THE
3 MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST "CIVIL RIGHTS DOCTOR," AND CELEBRATING HIS
4 LIFE AND LEGACY.

5 WHEREAS, Dr. Gilbert R. Mason, Sr., the much respected
6 Mississippi Gulf Coast "Civil Rights Doctor," died on Saturday,
7 July 8, 2006, and was honored at his funeral as hundreds paid last
8 respects to the 77-year old self-described Freedom Boomer; and

9 WHEREAS, Dr. Mason was a dedicated physician who was
10 committed to quality health care and fundamental patient rights
11 for those on the Gulf Coast and the entire State of Mississippi.
12 He fought for respect for the dignity of black patients and white
13 patients alike and for equal status of black physicians in
14 previously all-white hospitals and the medical community at large;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, compelled to ensure equal civil liberties for all,
17 Dr. Gilbert R. Mason, Sr., was a fearless patriot who often was
18 one of the first in a group of concerned citizens that fought for
19 social change, justice and civil rights. He was commonly referred
20 to as the "Civil Rights Doctor" or the "Drum Major for Freedom."
21 He was recognized for his local, state and national activism; and

22 WHEREAS, a focal point of his tireless legacy was to effect
23 equal access to education in the public schools in Biloxi and all
24 of Harrison County. Distressed by inequality in voting rights,
25 Dr. Mason and others pioneered political awareness among black
26 citizens through staunch involvement with the National Association
27 for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Democratic

28 Party. He employed every tool to establish voting rights as well
29 as voter education programs; and

30 WHEREAS, the beach wade-ins he organized in the late 1950s
31 and early 1960s were Mississippi's first noted civil disobedience.
32 The price he paid was smear campaigns against his practice and
33 threats against his family. After an 8-year court battle led to
34 desegregation of Coast beaches in 1968, Mason did not quit his
35 vocal public stance for civil rights; and

36 WHEREAS, Dr. Gilbert Rutledge Mason, Sr., was born at home in
37 Jackson, Mississippi, on October 7, 1928. He was the third child
38 of Willie A. and Adeline Mason. An intellectually curious child,
39 he was educated in public schools and was a 1945 graduate of
40 Lanier High School in Jackson, Mississippi. He participated in
41 Boy Scouting among many other activities and was one of the first
42 black Mississippians to earn the rank of Eagle Scout; and

43 WHEREAS, at a young age of 16, Dr. Mason pursued an
44 undergraduate degree at Tennessee State University in Nashville,
45 Tennessee. During his freshman year, he met Natalie Lorraine
46 Hamlar of Roanoke, Virginia, whom he married in 1950. While in
47 college, Dr. Mason became a member of Zeta Mu Lambda Chapter of
48 Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, beginning one of his most inspiring
49 life-long activities. In 1949, he completed studies with "high
50 distinction" earning a double degree in Chemistry and Biology with
51 a minor in Math. He pursued a Doctor of Medicine Degree at Howard
52 University in Washington, D.C., and graduated with honors in the
53 Spring of 1954. He completed an internship at Homer G. Phillips
54 Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri, one of the foremost postgraduate
55 training institutions for African-American physicians. In later
56 years, he was a proud to earn certification as a Diplomate of the
57 American Academy of Family Physicians, and he maintained his board
58 certification status until the year of his retirement; and

59 WHEREAS, determined to make his home in Mississippi, Dr.
60 Mason identified Biloxi as the place he wanted to begin his

61 medical career. He moved with his wife and one-year-old son,
62 Gilbert Jr., and established a medical practice in 1955. The
63 Masons quickly became members of First Missionary Baptist Church
64 in Biloxi, Mississippi. Because of his commitment to the
65 community, he became a Scout Master (Troop 416), a member of the
66 PTA, Masonic Lodge (33rd Degree), and Elks Lodge. He often felt
67 his most significant contribution to the community was founding
68 the Biloxi Branch of the NAACP in 1960, of which he was President
69 for more than 30 years; and

70 WHEREAS, Dr. Mason became affiliated with the Biloxi Regional
71 Hospital (later known as Howard Memorial). In 1967, he was
72 conferred full staff privileges and would later become a member of
73 the State Board of Health, the State Board of Medical Examiners,
74 and was selected Chairman of the family practice section at Biloxi
75 Regional Hospital; and

76 WHEREAS, Dr. Mason will be missed by his endearing wife,
77 Gwendolyn Lewis Anderson Mason; his beloved daughters, Diane
78 Marcelin, Gilda Yvette Sizer, Yolanda Marie Juzang, Angela Rose
79 Juzange, and Gilbert Jr.'s ex-spouse Givonna Joseph; his sons,
80 Darian Anderson, (Karen), David Owens Mason, Adam Owens and Dr.
81 Gilbert Rutledge Mason, Jr.; mother-in-law, Ada Lewis;
82 sister-in-law, Elnora N. Mason; niece, Carolyn Mason Stamps
83 Varando, and a host of other relatives and friends; and

84 WHEREAS, the State of Mississippi has lost a leader whose
85 inspiration was to change America and the world. May he rest in
86 peace and may we all do our part to honor his life and legacy with
87 our words and actions:

88 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
89 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That
90 we do hereby express the sympathy of the Legislature on the death
91 of Dr. Gilbert Mason, Sr., the Mississippi Gulf Coast "Civil
92 Rights Doctor" and celebrate his life and legacy as an unwavering

93 advocate of civil and human rights and a champion of nonviolence
94 which is to be admired and emulated.

95 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
96 the surviving family of Dr. Mason and be made available to *The Sun*
97 *Herald* and to members of the Capitol Press Corps.