

By: Senator(s) Little, Burton,
Carmichael, Gollott, Gordon,
Hyde-Smith, Butler, Ross, Kirby,
Browning, Frazier, Chaney, Lee
(35th)

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 507

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE LIFE AND PUBLIC
2 SERVICE OF FORMER STATE SENATOR AND UNITED STATES CONGRESSMAN
3 GILLESPIE V. "SONNY" MONTGOMERY, AND EXPRESSING THE SYMPATHY OF
4 THE LEGISLATURE.

5 WHEREAS, the State of Mississippi and every military veteran
6 in our country lost a friend with the death of legendary lawmaker,
7 former State Senator and United States Congressman Gillespie V.
8 "Sonny" Montgomery of Meridian, Mississippi, on Friday, May 12,
9 2006; and

10 WHEREAS, Congressman Montgomery represented east central
11 Mississippi in Congress for 30 years. The popular lawmaker and
12 career soldier earned the reputation on Capitol Hill as "Mr.
13 Veteran" for his commitment to veterans' issues and the national
14 defense. Before going to Congress, he served for a decade in the
15 Mississippi Senate, from 1957-1966; and

16 WHEREAS, "Sonny was a giant among Congressmen in Mississippi
17 history," said Governor Haley Barbour. "The good he did for
18 veterans is a national accomplishment, but he accomplished so much
19 in so many areas that all Mississippians are grateful for his
20 service and leadership. He was an indispensable ally of President
21 Ronald Reagan and his longtime personal friend President George
22 H.W. Bush. We will miss him very much"; and

23 WHEREAS, Congressman Montgomery served in the U.S. Army and
24 Mississippi Army National Guard for 35 years. He was a Lieutenant
25 in the 12th Armored Division in Europe during World War II, where
26 he was awarded the Bronze Star. He was mobilized as an Army Guard
27 officer with the 31st Infantry Division for the Korean War and

28 remained on active duty until 1952. He retired from the
29 Mississippi National Guard as a Major General in 1980; and

30 WHEREAS, Congressman "Sonny" Montgomery's contributions to
31 the men and women of the National Guard and the other military
32 services are beyond measure. He did so many things to help define
33 and shape our Guard force that enabled us to transform from a
34 strategic reserve into an operational entity and equal partner
35 with the other military services for the 21st Century's global war
36 on terrorism; and

37 WHEREAS, despite decades of service to his country, U.S.
38 Representative G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery will be remembered for a
39 single piece of legislation that experts and his contemporaries
40 credit with saving the concept of the all-volunteer military. The
41 Montgomery GI Bill, first established as a test program in 1984
42 and made permanent in 1987, was Montgomery's greatest gift to
43 military veterans. Previous legislation to help veterans largely
44 was tied to rewarding citizens who served during wartime. But in
45 the years following the Vietnam War and the end of the draft,
46 recruitment waned and the military complained that quality
47 recruits were harder to find. In the early 1980s as House
48 Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman, Congressman Montgomery began
49 working on a new proposal that would attract and reward quality
50 troops by offering them the promise of an educational benefit
51 after their service; and

52 WHEREAS, Montgomery was born in Meridian on August 5, 1920,
53 the son of Gillespie and Emily Montgomery. He was educated in the
54 Meridian Public Schools, the McCallie School in Chattanooga,
55 Tennessee, and received a B.S. Degree from Mississippi State
56 University in 1943. He was a member of the basketball team and
57 was elected President of the Student Association at Mississippi
58 State University. Mississippi State University President, Dr.
59 Robert H. "Doc" Foglesong said: "My thoughts are that first and
60 foremost, Sonny Montgomery was my friend and he will be greatly

61 missed. I've sought his advise for more than a decade before
62 coming to Mississippi State University. On a broader level,
63 Congressman Montgomery will be remembered as one who shaped this
64 university. He was 'Mr. MSU' the year he graduated and he remains
65 so today"; and

66 WHEREAS, Montgomery's successor, 3rd District U.S.
67 Representative Chip Pickering, R-Flora, said: "Sonny will be
68 remembered as a Mississippi statesman with a 30-year dedication to
69 our Armed Forces and veterans. His legacy of public service
70 stretches across generations and across party lines and is a
71 testimony to his vision of strong America that honors our
72 commitments to military service. We will miss the twinkle in his
73 eye, the determination in his voice and the passion of his
74 policies"; and

75 WHEREAS, his name is on the Veterans Affairs Medical Center
76 in Jackson, the Naval Reserve Training Center at the Naval Air
77 Station Meridian, the Sonny Montgomery Airport at Forest and the
78 Mississippi Air National Guard's C-17 Globemaster II Transport
79 Plane, dubbed "The Spirit of G.V. 'Sonny' Montgomery," the third
80 aircraft in U.S. military history to be named for an individual.
81 The late congressman's name also appears on the National Guard
82 Association building in Washington, D.C., and the Veterans homes
83 in Collins, Kosciusko and Oxford, Mississippi; and

84 WHEREAS, President G.W. Bush presented the Medal of Freedom
85 to Congressman Montgomery in Washington in November 2005. The
86 medal is awarded for exceptional service; and

87 WHEREAS, Congressman Montgomery's public service was
88 exemplified by sound judgment and fairness, and he set the highest
89 standard in all of his many roles, as a veteran, citizen
90 statesman, champion of all veterans, leader in the Mississippi
91 Legislature and in the United States Congress and as a true
92 friend. His legacy is a strong and free America, and for this and

93 for a lifetime of selfless service, a grateful Legislature and
94 State thank him:

95 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
96 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That
97 we do hereby commend the life and public service of former State
98 Senator and United States Congressman Gillespie V. "Sonny"
99 Montgomery of Meridian, Mississippi, and express to his family and
100 many friends and colleagues the sympathy of the Legislature on his
101 passing.

102 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
103 the surviving family of former Senator Montgomery and be made
104 available to the Capitol Press Corps.