

By: Representative Buck

To: Rules

## HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 23

1 A RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF MRS. BERNICE  
2 E. TOTTEN AND EXPRESSING DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO HER FAMILY AND  
3 FRIENDS UPON HER PASSING.

4 WHEREAS, Bernice E. Totten, born September 1, 1921, departed  
5 this earthly life on Wednesday, January 31, 2007, to enter into  
6 eternal rest with her Heavenly Father, causing great sorrow and  
7 loss to her family and friends; and

8 WHEREAS, Mrs. Totten attended MI College where she received a  
9 teaching certificate that allowed her to teach school at  
10 Strickland School under the tutelage of Mrs. Euretha King and  
11 Union Valley School under the tutelage of Mrs. Susie Matthews  
12 before undergoing an eight-week training program at Tuskegee  
13 Institute in 1968 to receive a teaching certificate in early  
14 childhood education and additional studies at Rust College through  
15 the Head Start Program; and

16 WHEREAS, deemed a trailblazer all of her life, Mrs. Totten  
17 helped in founding the Child Development Group of Mississippi  
18 (CDGM), which was the first Head Start Program, later changed to  
19 ICS Head Start, one of many programs originating from the civil  
20 rights struggle; and

21 WHEREAS, before her involvement with CDGM and ICS, Mrs.  
22 Totten was very active in the civil rights movement, commencing  
23 her work with voter registration drives in the 1950s, aiding in  
24 freedom summers by housing freedom riders in her home, which  
25 became the distribution headquarters for donated items sent from  
26 the North; and

27           WHEREAS, Mrs. Totten overcame obstacles that presented  
28 themselves during the time she sought public office, winning the  
29 office of road supervisor in 1974 and progressing to serve three  
30 additional consecutive terms, claiming the honor of being the  
31 first African-American road supervisor in Marshall County and the  
32 first African-American female to hold that position in the entire  
33 state; and

34           WHEREAS, after her retirement as supervisor, during which  
35 time she was faithfully supported by her late husband, Napoleon  
36 Totten and their 13 children, Mrs. Totten engaged all the more in  
37 helping the residents of her community, diligently executing the  
38 service of a Christian and servant; and

39           WHEREAS, it is the policy of the House of Representatives to  
40 commend the life of such an outstanding individual as Mrs. Totten,  
41 whose life was a beacon of hope and a ray of sunshine for all who  
42 have been privileged to be in her company:

43           NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF  
44 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby  
45 commend the life and legacy of Mrs. Bernice E. Totten and express  
46 deepest sympathy to her family and friends upon her passing.

47           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be  
48 furnished to the family of Mrs. Totten and to the members of the  
49 Capitol Press Corps.