

By: Senator(s) Jackson (11th), Albritton,
Browning, Burton, Butler, Carmichael, Chaney,
Chassaniol, Clarke, Davis, Dawkins, Dearing,
Gollott, Gordon, Harden, Hewes, Jackson
(15th), Jackson (32nd), Jordan, Mettetal,
Thomas, Tollison, White

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 519

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE HEROISM OF WILLIAM
2 (WILL) TOWNSEND OF CLARKSDALE, MISSISSIPPI, WHO DIED WHILE
3 RESCUING OTHERS IN THE ALPHA TAU OMEGA FRATERNITY HOUSE FIRE ON
4 THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI CAMPUS ON AUGUST 27, 2004.

5 WHEREAS, William "Will" Townsend died a hero; and

6 WHEREAS, Townsend, a 19-year-old Clarksdale, Mississippi,
7 native, was one of three University of Mississippi students who
8 died early Friday morning, August 27, 2004, in a fire at the Alpha
9 Tau Omega Fraternity House on the campus of the University of
10 Mississippi; and

11 WHEREAS, according to Townsend's father, Jim, his son died
12 after going back into the fraternity house to save a friend. Jim
13 Townsend, Vice President and Trust Officer at First National Bank
14 of Clarksdale, said his son, after smelling smoke, awoke and
15 alerted others in the fraternity that the house was on fire. He
16 also helped the house mother escape safely; and

17 WHEREAS, once outside, Will, a Sophomore Accounting major,
18 went back in the house to save a friend he knew was missing. Jim
19 Townsend said his son died of smoke inhalation. The father said
20 many ATO fraternity members thanked him for his son having saved
21 lives in the house; and

22 WHEREAS, people who knew Will Townsend, a 2003 graduate of
23 Lee Academy, said this story sounds a lot like the kid they knew;
24 and

25 WHEREAS, "He never hesitated to help others," said high
26 school Geometry and Calculus teacher, Beverly Thomas. "Will was a
27 special kid. In addition to being very intelligent, he was so

28 much fun to be around. He was one of the most-liked fellows in
29 the class"; and

30 WHEREAS, Will Townsend, an Ole Miss student, was born October
31 3, 1984, in Clarksdale. He was a 2003 graduate of Lee Academy,
32 where he ranked 11th out of 62 graduates with a 4.0 grade-point
33 average. He was Co-Editor of the Annual, a member of the Key
34 Club, President of the National Junior Honor Society, Vice
35 President of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and a three-year
36 member of the National Honor Society. He was a member of Quill
37 and Scroll and participated on the school's Odyssey of the Mind
38 Team, which advanced to the world finals. He served as a football
39 manager for two years and was a member of Lee's Math Competition
40 and Mock Trial Teams. On the latter, he was voted Best Attorney
41 by the judges. He was a four-year Academic Betterment Competition
42 participant; and

43 WHEREAS, Mr. Townsend's honors included the Hugh O'Brien
44 Youth Leadership Conference, the Rotary Youth Leadership
45 Conference, American Legion Boys State, Exchange Club Student of
46 the Month, Lee Academy Hall of Fame, Who's Who Among American High
47 School Students, American Legion Good Citizenship Award and the
48 Clarksdale Rotary Club Chester Curtis Award. He was a member of
49 the Chrysalis Community and the First United Methodist Church
50 Youth Group. He scored a 30 on the American College Test and was
51 named Lee Academy's STAR Student by the Mississippi Economic
52 Council. He also won the Eminent Scholar Award; and

53 WHEREAS, at Ole Miss, Mr. Townsend was a member of Alpha Tau
54 Omega Fraternity and received the Peery Accounting Scholarship;
55 and

56 WHEREAS, Will Townsend was an Eagle Scout and also loved
57 sports, especially Lee Academy and Ole Miss football. But his
58 life revolved around Ole Miss. He was at every game cheering for
59 them. He loved politics and world events. He loved expressing
60 his opinion on politics. He knew what he wanted out of life; and

61 WHEREAS, survivors include his parents, James and Vida
62 Townsend of Clarksdale; a sister, Ellen Townsend of Clarksdale;
63 and a grandmother, Rose Townsend of Greenville; and

64 WHEREAS, it is with great sadness that we remember the
65 actions of this young University of Mississippi student who was
66 hailed as a hero, and is greatly missed by his family, his friends
67 and by the State of Mississippi:

68 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
69 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That
70 we do hereby commend the heroism of William (Will) Townsend of
71 Clarksdale, Mississippi, who died while rescuing others in the
72 Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity House fire on the University of
73 Mississippi campus on August 27, 2004, and we extend our sympathy
74 and prayers to his family and friends in his memory.

75 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
76 the surviving family of Will Townsend, be forwarded to the
77 Chancellor of the University of Mississippi and be made available
78 to the Capitol Press Corps.