

By: Senator(s) Michel, Tollison, Mettetal,
Davis, Chaney, Burton, Frazier, Thames,
Pickering, White, Hyde-Smith, Fillingane,
Wilemon, Moffatt, Clarke, King, Flowers,
Williamson, Nunnelee, Brown, Ross, Lee
(35th), Kirby, Hewes, Horhn, Walls, Thomas,
Chassaniol, Jackson (11th), Butler, Dearing,
Doxey, Gordon, Little, Simmons

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 556

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE OUTSTANDING CAREER OF
2 OLE MISS ALL-AMERICAN SENIOR LINEBACKER PATRICK WILLIS AND
3 RECOGNIZING HIS NATIONAL AWARDS.

4 WHEREAS, 6'3", 230-pound All-American Senior Linebacker
5 Patrick Willis (No. 49) has dominated opposing offenses and earned
6 his place as the most heralded defensive player in Ole Miss
7 football history; and

8 WHEREAS, in a day and age when the average college football
9 player is rarely willing to wait for an opportunity, Senior
10 Linebacker Patrick Willis has displayed an admirable amount of
11 patience throughout his career with the Ole Miss Rebels. A 2005
12 All-America selection and candidate for numerous national awards
13 this season, Willis did not make the starting lineup until his
14 Junior year, and then chose to wait for his chance to enter the
15 professional ranks by returning to Ole Miss for his Senior
16 campaign. It would be hard for anyone to pass up the kind of
17 financial stability that would come from being an early-round
18 draft pick in the National Football League, but Willis did just
19 that, and for a variety of reasons. "I just wanted to enjoy this
20 Senior year as a student and as a college football player," said
21 the 2006 Chucky Mullins Courage Award recipient. "I've enjoyed
22 playing with my teammates again. After not having a healthy
23 season like I wanted to (last year) and also being projected as a
24 third-round draft pick, I felt like I was better than that. I
25 hope when it's all said and done this year that I can prove that";
26 and

27 WHEREAS, Willis led the Southeastern Conference in tackles
28 for the second-straight season with 137, including 87 solos. He
29 finished the season ranked sixth in the NCAA in total tackles and
30 third in solo tackles. In addition, he had three sacks, 11.5 TFLs
31 for minus 44 yards, seven passes defensed, two forced fumbles and
32 one fumble recovery; and

33 WHEREAS, Patrick Willis was named the 2006 Butkus Award
34 winner on Thursday, December 7, 2006, at the Home Depot/ESPN
35 College Football Awards Show. Willis, a Bruceton, Tennessee
36 native, is the first player from the State of Mississippi to take
37 home the award honoring the nation's top linebacker. The Butkus
38 Award carries the name and support of one of the greatest middle
39 linebackers in football history, Dick Butkus. "I would like to
40 thank my Head Coach Ed Orgeron, my foster parents, Chris and Julie
41 Finley, my teammates and the entire Ole Miss family for supporting
42 me throughout my career," said Willis, who became only the second
43 player from the SEC to win the award. Willis was also recognized
44 as a member of the 2006 Walter Camp All-America Team at the awards
45 show; and

46 WHEREAS, Patrick Willis picked up another National Award on
47 Monday, December 18, 2006, when he was named the recipient of the
48 Jack Lambert Award, which is presented by the Touchdown Club of
49 Columbus, Ohio, to college football's Top Linebacker. The Lambert
50 Award is named for Pittsburgh Steelers great and Pro Football Hall
51 of Fame Linebacker Jack Lambert; and

52 WHEREAS, Willis also picked up another first team All-America
53 honor when he was recognized by ESPN.com. He had previously been
54 honored with First Team All-America status this year by *The*
55 *Associated Press*, the Walter Camp Football Foundation, *Sporting*
56 *News*, *the Football Writers' Association of America*, *Pro Football*
57 *Weekly*, the *Gridiron Gazette*, *SI.com*, *CBSSportsline.com*,
58 *Rivals.com* and *Scout.com*; and

59 WHEREAS, by being named to a majority of the major
60 All-America squads, Willis becomes the first consensus
61 All-American at Ole Miss since Rebel tight end Rufus French in
62 1998. Willis has now been selected First Team All-American by 11
63 different publications and/or organizations, joining three other
64 Ole Miss players to have earned first team honors on 11 different
65 All-America squads: End Barney Poole in 1947; Fullback Charlie
66 Flowers in 1959; and Tackle Jim Dunaway in 1962. Quarterback Jake
67 Gibbs is the most honored Ole Miss player when it comes to being
68 named first team All-American, having been selected to 12
69 different teams in 1960; and

70 WHEREAS, the Bruceton, Tennessee native was previously
71 honored as the SEC Defensive Player of the Year by both *The*
72 *Associated Press* and the league coaches. Willis joins former
73 Rebels Parker Hall (1938), Barney Poole (1948), Kline Gilbert
74 (1952), Crawford Mims (1953), Rex Reed Boggan (1954), Charlie
75 Flowers (1959), Jake Gibbs (1960), Allen Brown (1964), Wesley
76 Walls (1988), Everett Lindsay (1992) and Rufus French (1998), as
77 *The Associated Press* All-America picks; and

78 WHEREAS, he picked up his first award of the 2006 season on
79 Wednesday, November 29, 2006, when he won the Conerly Trophy,
80 given to the best college football player in the state. The
81 winner of the Conerly Trophy, named for former Quarterback Charlie
82 Conerly, a Clarksdale, Mississippi native who starred for Ole Miss
83 and the New York Giants, is awarded by a panel of 60 Mississippi
84 media representatives; and

85 WHEREAS, not only has Willis continued to be an all-star
86 performer individually, he has relished the opportunity to lead
87 the team as one of two permanent team captains, along with
88 Offensive Lineman Andrew Wicker; and

89 WHEREAS, one of the main factors in Willis' decision to
90 return was to earn his college degree. He is currently on track
91 to graduate in May 2007 with a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal

92 Justice. While so many modern-day athletes jump at the chance for
93 instant glory, Willis has worked on securing a solid background of
94 learning about life and football. His difficult childhood has
95 been well documented, but Patrick Willis has admirably not used
96 that as an excuse to forego a college degree; and

97 WHEREAS, whether he will use his physical tools as a speedy
98 linebacker in the NFL, or he will use his college degree and
99 enthusiasm for community service to contribute as an everyday
100 citizen, or both, Patrick Willis is an exceptional graduate of the
101 University of Mississippi and Ole Miss Football, and it is with
102 great pride that we recognize the accolades of this student
103 athlete who brought honor to his university, his career and to the
104 State of Mississippi:

105 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
106 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That
107 we do hereby commend the outstanding career of Ole Miss Senior
108 Linebacker Patrick Willis, congratulate him for his many national
109 awards and extend to him and his family our best wishes for a
110 successful career in professional football and in his future
111 endeavors.

112 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
113 Patrick Willis and forwarded to Head Football Coach Ed Orgeron and
114 Chancellor Robert Khayat and be made available to the Capitol
115 Press Corps.