

By: Senator(s) Horhn, Norwood, Frazier,  
Jordan, Simmons (13th), Simmons (12th),  
Barnett, Blackmon, Burton, Chassaniol,  
Fillingane, Jackson (11th), Jackson (32nd)

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 542

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING AND CONGRATULATING RENOWN  
2 ACTRESS DR. TOMMIE "TONEA" STEWART OF GREENWOOD, MISSISSIPPI, UPON  
3 HER RECEIPT OF THE 2016 GOVERNORS ARTS AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN  
4 ACTING.

5 WHEREAS, Dr. Tommie "Tonea" Stewart is a native of Greenwood,  
6 Mississippi, and a tenured Professor, former Chair of Theatre  
7 Arts, and Dean of Performing and Visual Arts at Alabama State  
8 University; and

9 WHEREAS, Dr. Stewart is a trailblazer in theatre. She was  
10 the first African-American woman to receive a doctorate from  
11 Florida State University's School of Theatre and the first  
12 McKnight Doctoral Fellow in Theatre Arts. During her study at  
13 Florida State University, Dr. Stewart received a fellowship from  
14 the National Endowment for the Humanities. In 1995, Dr. Stewart  
15 was inducted into the National Black College Alumni Hall of Fame;  
16 and

17 WHEREAS, during her time as a student and later as a  
18 Professor at Jackson State University, Dr. Stewart was a protégé  
19 of Writer Dr. Margaret Walker Alexander. Over the years, Dr.



20 Stewart has returned to Jackson State to participate in theatrical  
21 productions. Notably, in 1973, she was one of the featured  
22 lecturers at the Phillis Wheatley Poetry Festival, which featured  
23 30 of the leading black female artists of the day, including Alice  
24 Walker, Sonia Sanchez, Nikki Giovanni, and Charlayne Hunter Gault;  
25 and

26 WHEREAS, Dr. Stewart began her professional acting career in  
27 1969 at New Stage Theatre, where she was the first  
28 African-American to direct and star in a leading role. Since  
29 then, Dr. Stewart has performed at Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy  
30 Center and for audiences in Turkey, South Korea, Scotland, Mexico,  
31 and Canada; and

32 WHEREAS, her film credits include "The Rosa Parks Story,"  
33 "Mississippi Burning," "Invasion of the Body Snatchers III," "The  
34 Wronged Man," "The Hollars," and "A Time to Kill." Her  
35 performance in "A Time to Kill" garnered an NAACP Image Award.  
36 Toneya's television appearances include the shows "Walker," "Texas  
37 Ranger," "Memphis Beat," "Matlock," "ER," and "Touched by an  
38 Angel." Dr. Stewart may be best known for playing Aunt Etta  
39 Kibbie on the television series "In the Heat of the Night" in more  
40 than 30 episodes; and

41 WHEREAS, she is a 1999 Gabriel Award winner, and a New York  
42 World Festival Gold Medal Award winner for her narration of the  
43 Public Radio International series "Remembering Slavery." Dr.



44 Stewart has also been recognized for her artistic excellence as a  
45 "Champion of Change" by President Barack Obama; and

46 WHEREAS, along with teaching generations of young actors at  
47 the college level, she led community education programs in acting  
48 for youth and adults. With a group of arts leaders, Dr. Stewart  
49 helped the Mississippi Arts Commission initiate the Governor's  
50 Arts Awards in 1988; and it is with great pride that we recognize  
51 a Mississippi Artist whose record of achievement has brought honor  
52 to her community and to the State of Mississippi:

53 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF  
54 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That  
55 we do hereby commend and congratulate renown Actress Dr. Tommie  
56 "Tonea" Stewart of Greenwood, Mississippi, upon her receipt of the  
57 2016 Governors Arts Award for Excellence in Acting, and extend our  
58 best wishes to Tonea on this high honor.

59 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That this resolution be presented to  
60 Tonea Stewart, forwarded to the Mississippi Arts Commission, and  
61 made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

