

By: Representatives McGee, Watson

To: Rules

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 19

1 A RESOLUTION CELEBRATING THE LIFE AND MOURNING THE LOSS OF  
2 CIVIL RIGHTS ICON PEGGY JEAN CONNOR, AND EXPRESSING DEEPEST  
3 SYMPATHY TO HER FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

4 WHEREAS, it is written in Ecclesiastes 3:1 that "To  
5 everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under  
6 the Heaven," and as such, the immaculate author and finisher of  
7 our soul's destiny summoned the mortal presence of dearly beloved,  
8 Peggy Jean Connor, to eternal rest, as she made life's final  
9 transition from earthly travailing to heavenly reward, rendering  
10 great sorrow and loss to her family and friends; and

11 WHEREAS, the State of Mississippi lost a wonderful friend and  
12 community pillar on Saturday, January 13, 2018, with the passing  
13 of Peggy Jean Connor, a devout civil rights advocate, voting  
14 rights activist and community leader, who possessed an affinity  
15 for inspiring others to maximize their fullest potential through  
16 her selfless and devout service to her community and the state;  
17 and



18           WHEREAS, Mrs. Connor was born October 29, 1932, in  
19 Hattiesburg, Mississippi, to John Henry Gould and Esther Lee  
20 Jemison Gould, being the eldest of four children, and she attended  
21 Eureka High School and was one of the founding members of Eureka  
22 Rowan (EURO) High School Reunion group, which later grew to  
23 include Hattiesburg High School graduates; and

24           WHEREAS, coming from a family with deeply entrenched  
25 traditions of community participation, Mrs. Connor attended mass  
26 voter registration meetings with her father, and one night, after  
27 one of these meetings, Mrs. Connor was asked to become a  
28 citizenship teacher in her community, which she accepted; and

29           WHEREAS, Mrs. Connor traveled to Georgia for a training  
30 workshop after accepting the position of citizenship teacher, and  
31 upon returning home to Mississippi, she not only taught her  
32 students the process of registering to vote, but also taught them  
33 how to understand, interpret and apply the United States  
34 Constitution; and

35           WHEREAS, as a passionate advocate for doing what is right  
36 with a kind and sincere heart, Mrs. Connor was a devoted advocate  
37 for the right to vote, being involved in many demonstrations, and  
38 after numerous fruitless attempts to engage in the political  
39 process of the state with the Mississippi Democratic Party, she  
40 and her comrades formed the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party  
41 (MFDP), a parallel political party that was open to all people,



42 regardless of race, wherein she eventually served as executive  
43 secretary; and

44 WHEREAS, Mrs. Connor began registering people in her  
45 community to vote and organizing meetings on the precinct, county,  
46 district and state levels, being named chairperson of her precinct  
47 in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and also being one of the MFDP's  
48 delegates to the Democratic National Convention in 1964; and

49 WHEREAS, in 1966, Mrs. Connor and other individuals filed  
50 suit against the Governor of Mississippi to protest the legality  
51 of multi-member districts, and after 14 years, the United States  
52 Supreme Court ruled in *Connor v. Johnson* that the apportionment  
53 provisions in the Mississippi Constitution and statutes violated  
54 the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment of the United  
55 States Constitution, and because of Mrs. Connor's bravery, the  
56 path was opened for African Americans to become legislators in the  
57 State of Mississippi; and

58 WHEREAS, being a civil rights pioneer, Mrs. Connor became a  
59 stalwart champion for justice who also prevailed in her lawsuit  
60 against the Owl Drugstore in downtown Hattiesburg for refusing to  
61 serve her because of the color of her skin, and because of her  
62 bravery and courage to always stand up for what is right, Mrs.  
63 Connor was the recipient of many awards, including the Carter G.  
64 Woodson Black History Award for Courage in Civil Rights and the  
65 Lifetime of Service Achievement Award from D.R.E.A.M. of  
66 Hattiesburg; and



67           WHEREAS, Mrs. Connor was a lifelong member of Zion Chapel  
68 African Methodist Episcopal Church, and she served in many  
69 positions in her church, such as a steward, a member of the  
70 Finance Committee, a stewardess, a member of the Women's  
71 Missionary Society, a member of the Chancery and Sanctuary Choir  
72 and as a member of the Annie Mae James Scholarship Fund and  
73 Trustee; and at the time of her passing, Mrs. Connor was serving  
74 as a steward, a member of the Finance Committee and as Zion  
75 Chapel's elected delegate in the South Mississippi Annual  
76 Conference in the Eighth Episcopal District of the African  
77 Methodist Episcopal Church; and

78           WHEREAS, known by all for her courage and caring spirit, Mrs.  
79 Connor was respected and loved by all who knew her, especially her  
80 family with whom she loved to spend quality time with; and

81           WHEREAS, though she has traversed the river of life to now  
82 stand upon golden heavenly shores, the legacy of her selfless  
83 service and allegiance to God, family and the United States, will  
84 forever be etched in the hearts and memories of her loving  
85 survivors: children, Dennie Frank Connor, Jr., and Felecia Denise  
86 Connor Young (Roy); grandchildren, Roderick (Rico) Balam, Roy A.Z.  
87 (R.J.) Young and Denise LaJean Jemison Young Jero (Samuel);  
88 sister, Mrs. Eleanor Joyce Gould Tooson (Alonzo); and a host of  
89 nieces, nephews, cousins, godchildren and friends; and

90           WHEREAS, it is the policy of the House of Representatives to  
91 recognize outstanding individual contributions of exceptional



92 Mississippians, especially those such as Peggy Jean Connor, whose  
93 steadfast commitment to her family and tremendous dedication to  
94 her outstanding work as a civil rights activist has brought great  
95 honor to the State of Mississippi and to the nation as a whole:

96       NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF  
97 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby  
98 commemorate the life and many accomplishments of Peggy Jean  
99 Connor, and express deepest sympathy to her family and friends  
100 upon her passing.

101       BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be  
102 furnished to the family of Peggy Jean Connor and to the members of  
103 the Capitol Press Corps.

