

By: Senator(s) Jackson (11th), Butler,  
Barnett, Jordan, Turner-Ford, Simmons (12th),  
Frazier, Norwood, Dawkins, Witherspoon,  
Jackson (32nd), Horhn, Simmons (13th),  
Burton, Dearing

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 602

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION EXTENDING THE CONDOLENCES OF THE  
2 LEGISLATURE TO THE BEREAVED FAMILY OF LERONE BENNETT, JR., OF  
3 CLARKSDALE, INFLUENTIAL MISSISSIPPI JOURNALIST WHO CHRONICLED  
4 BLACK HISTORY.

5 WHEREAS, Lerone Bennett, Jr., of Clarksdale, Mississippi, who  
6 wrote influential books on African-American history and resilience  
7 and chronicled key events in the Civil Rights Movement as a  
8 Journalist and top Editor of *Ebony* Magazine, passed away on  
9 February 14, 2018; and

10 WHEREAS, Lerone Bennett, Jr., Historian and Executive Editor  
11 Emeritus of *Ebony* Magazine, was the author of ten books, including  
12 *Before The Mayflower*, which *American Legacy Magazine* called "one  
13 of the most popular single-volume histories of African-Americans  
14 ever written"; and

15 WHEREAS, the author, who called himself a  
16 witness-participant, was born in Clarksdale, Mississippi, on  
17 October 17, 1928, the son of Alma Reed Bennett and Lerone Bennett,  
18 Sr., and moved with his family at an early age to Jackson,  
19 Mississippi. He graduated from Lanier High School in 1945 and



20 started his journalism career as a teenage Reporter for the  
21 *Jackson Advocate* and the *Mississippi Enterprise*. During his early  
22 years, he led the Duke Bennett Jazz Orchestra, which performed in  
23 Mississippi and Louisiana; and

24 WHEREAS, after graduating from Atlanta's Morehouse College,  
25 he served as City Editor of the *Atlanta Daily World*. He joined  
26 Johnson Publishing Company in 1953 and became Associate Editor of  
27 *Ebony* in 1954. He became Executive Editor of *Ebony* in 1987 and  
28 Executive Editor Emeritus on his retirement in 2003. He assisted  
29 John H. Johnson, the legendary *Ebony* Publisher, in the preparation  
30 of his classic book, *Succeeding Against The Odds*, which is a  
31 must-read for anyone interested in African-Americans in corporate  
32 America; and

33 WHEREAS, the author was Visiting Professor of History at  
34 Northwestern University. His books, poems and short stories have  
35 been translated into French, German, Japanese, Swedish, Arabic and  
36 Russian. He received the Patron Saints Award of the Society of  
37 Midland Authors for a biography of his Morehouse collegemate,  
38 Martin Luther King, Jr., and the American Book Award for his study  
39 of Abraham Lincoln, *Forced into Glory*. He also received the  
40 Literature Award of the American Academy of Arts and Letters; and

41 WHEREAS, in 1978, he was featured at the Chancellor's  
42 Symposium on Southern History at the University of Mississippi.  
43 In 1997, he was cited as a distinguished Mississippian at the  
44 University of Mississippi, and he was featured, along with Richard



45 Wright, Eudora Welty, Shelby Foote, Margaret Walker and others, in  
46 the book *Mississippi Writers: Reflections of Childhood and Youth*;  
47 and

48 WHEREAS, Lerone served on the Board of Trustees of Columbia  
49 College, Chicago, Illinois, and the Chicago History Museum.  
50 President Clinton appointed him to the President's Committee on  
51 the Arts and Humanities, and President George W. Bush appointed  
52 him to the Presidential Commission on the proposed National Museum  
53 of African-American History and Culture; and

54 WHEREAS, in 1996, he received the highest honor of the Martin  
55 Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, the "Salute  
56 to Greatness" Award. In 2003, Lerone received the highest honor  
57 of the Association for the Study of African-American Life and  
58 History, the Carter G. Woodson Medallion. In 2004, he received  
59 the Distinguished W.E.B. DuBois Scholarship Award of the  
60 Association of Social and Behavioral Scientists. In 2006, Lerone  
61 was inducted into the Hall of Fame of the National Association of  
62 Black Journalists. He was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Sigma Delta  
63 Chi Journalism Society, Sigma Phi Pi and Kappa Alpha Psi. When  
64 Lerone was inducted into the International Civil Rights Walk of  
65 Fame, he said, "I owe more than I can ever repay to the  
66 African-American schoolteachers of Mississippi, who literally  
67 saved my life and who taught me that there was no limit to what I  
68 could dream and do." His footprints are in the pavement at the  
69 International Civil Rights Walk of Fame in Atlanta for being a



70 "foot soldier" in the movement. Lerone Bennett set the standard  
71 for his generation of African-American Journalists in America; and

72 WHEREAS, Lerone was preceded in death by his wife, Gloria,  
73 who was a *Jet* Journalist. She passed away in 2009. He is  
74 survived by three children; and

75 WHEREAS, it is with sadness that we note the passing of a  
76 respected author and historian who brought honor to his home  
77 community and to the State of Mississippi:

78 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF  
79 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That  
80 we do hereby extend the condolences of the Legislature to the  
81 bereaved family of Lerone Bennett, Jr., of Clarksdale, influential  
82 Mississippi Journalist who chronicled African-American history.

83 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to  
84 the surviving family of Lerone Bennett, forwarded to the  
85 Mississippi Arts Commission, and made available to the Capitol  
86 Press Corps.

