

By: Senator(s) Branning, Blackwell, Burton,  
Dearing, DeBar, Frazier, Jackson (32nd),  
McDaniel, Seymour

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 610

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION JOINING THE CITIZENS OF WINSTON  
2 COUNTY IN HONORING THE SERVICE OF VIETNAM PURPLE HEART VETERAN  
3 BILLY RAY METTS ON THE OCCASION OF THE 2018 BLACK HISTORY MONTH  
4 EXHIBIT "AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN TIMES OF WAR."

5 WHEREAS, the theme for the 2018 Black History Month is  
6 African-Americans in Times of War. The theme suggests that  
7 contemporary conditions, past and present, gives us cause for  
8 critical pause in our studies and deliberations to consider the  
9 specific and unique issues faced by African-Americans in times of  
10 war; and

11 WHEREAS, Billy Ray Metts of Louisville, Mississippi, was  
12 chosen to be honored at the 2018 Black History Exhibit at the  
13 Winston County Library. Elmetra Patterson is the Curator of this  
14 exhibit, with assistance from Mattie Eichelberger-Davis of  
15 Richmond, California; Lorenda Eichelberger and her husband, Eddie  
16 Littleton; and Friends of Dean Park, Inc.; and

17 WHEREAS, Billy Ray was born March 8, 1946, to Jessie and  
18 Alberta Metts in Winston County. He graduated from Louisville



19 Colored High School in 1966 as a Trojan football player. His  
20 parents were not educated but Billy Metts said, "By the Grace of  
21 God, they knew that their children needed education and sent us to  
22 school after harvesting the crops"; and

23 WHEREAS, he was drafted into the Army in January 1967 going  
24 to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, for basic training and later to Fort  
25 Polk, Louisiana, from where he was deployed for Vietnam after a  
26 fifteen-day leave. Private First Class Metts was assigned to the  
27 196th Light Infantry Brigade. The 196th Light Infantry Brigade  
28 was raised again at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, in September 1965  
29 and originally scheduled to be sent to the Dominican Republic in  
30 mid-1966, but was rushed to Vietnam instead and posted in the  
31 western portion of the III Corps Tactical Zone. It initiated  
32 Operation Attleboro into War Zone C of Tay Ninh Province, which  
33 developed into a major action after a large enemy base camp was  
34 uncovered on October, 19, 1966; and

35 WHEREAS, in April 1967 the brigade was selected, along with  
36 the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division and the 3rd Brigade, 25th  
37 Infantry Division, to form a provisional division-sized unit  
38 called Task Force OREGON and moved to the I Corps Tactical Zone.  
39 The brigade stayed with this command, which was converted into the  
40 23d Infantry Division (AMERICAL) on September 25, 1967. The 196th  
41 Light Infantry Brigade officially joined this division on February  
42 15, 1969. It operated throughout northern Vietnam, and after the  
43 division closed out of Vietnam on November 29, 1971, the 196th



44 Light Infantry Brigade was reconstituted as a separate  
45 (provisional) brigade-sized element to safeguard the same area of  
46 operations. In April 1971, the brigade was relocated to Da Nang  
47 for major port security duties. The brigade departed Vietnam as  
48 the last U.S. Army combat brigade to leave in Increment XII of the  
49 U.S. Army withdrawal; and

50 WHEREAS, after being in Vietnam for four months, Billy Ray  
51 was severely injured while on patrol duty by an antipersonnel  
52 mine. This is an explosive which is a form of land mine designed  
53 for use against humans, as opposed to anti-tank mines which are  
54 designed for use against vehicles. He lost one leg on site and  
55 the other leg was amputated later in Vietnam. After a brief  
56 processing, he was flown to Japan and later to Fort Gordon,  
57 Augusta, Georgia, for medical care, including prosthetics; and

58 WHEREAS, according to the American War Library, 7,262  
59 African-Americans were killed in Vietnam. African-Americans made  
60 up 14.1% of the total. Civil Rights Leader Dr. Martin Luther  
61 King, Jr., spoke about the fact that African-Americans were  
62 assigned in greater numbers to the combat units of the Army and  
63 Marine Corps. African-Americans' casualties soared over 20%  
64 during 1965 and 1966. President Lyndon B. Johnson ordered that  
65 African-American participation should be cut back in the combat  
66 units, and as a result, the African-American casualty rate was cut  
67 to 11.5% by 1969; and



68           WHEREAS, Billy Ray Metts received the Purple Heart Medal  
69 while at Fort Gordon. The Purple Heart is one of the most  
70 recognized and respected medals awarded to members of the U.S.  
71 Armed Forces. It was introduced as the "Badge of Military Merit"  
72 by General George Washington in 1782. It is the nation's oldest  
73 military medal. On the back of the medal, it reads "FOR MILITARY  
74 MERIT." Billy Ray Metts' Purple Heart Medal is included in the  
75 exhibit at the library; and

76           WHEREAS, Billy Ray Metts has turned his injury into a life of  
77 serving and inspiring others. He is a Red Cross Disaster  
78 Volunteer. He worked with Winston Strong to help in the recovery  
79 of Winston County from the tornado that devastated the county. He  
80 and the Baptist Laymen helped to restore several houses in the  
81 county. Regarding his injury, his attitude is "Life Goes On."  
82 After returning to Louisville, he married Lucile Harris and they  
83 have a son, Larando, and a daughter, LaShasta. Both children are  
84 married and have four children between them. Unfortunately, he  
85 lost his wife, Lucile, in 2015 after 45 years of marriage; and

86           WHEREAS, he completed college at East Central Community  
87 College with a Degree in Electronics. Billy Ray completed courses  
88 at the Mississippi Baptist Seminary and is presently enrolled in  
89 classes at New Foundation Seminary. He is a member of Mt. Moriah  
90 Missionary Baptist Church as a Deacon and Teacher and is also the  
91 President of the New Educational State Convention of Mississippi  
92 as a Baptist Laymen. Billy Ray retired in 2007 from the



93 Louisville Alternative School as an In-School Supervisor after 20  
94 years; and

95 WHEREAS, we can never repay our debt to the Veterans of the  
96 Vietnam conflict, but we must do what we can, with all that we  
97 have, to live our lives in a way that pays tribute to their  
98 memory, and we pause to honor a great Mississippian:

99 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF  
100 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That  
101 we do hereby honor the service of Vietnam Purple Heart Veteran  
102 Billy Ray Metts on the occasion of the 2018 Black History Month  
103 exhibit "African-Americans in Times of War," and extend our best  
104 wishes to Sergeant Metts and his family on this auspicious  
105 occasion.

106 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to  
107 Billy Ray Metts and his family, and made available to the Capitol  
108 Press Corps.

