

By: Senator(s) Wiggins, Kirby, Barnett, Blackmon, Blackwell, Carmichael, Caughman, Clarke, Dearing, Jackson (11th), Jackson (15th), Jackson (32nd), Jordan, Massey, McMahan, Parker, Seymour

To: Rules

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 18

1 A RESOLUTION TO COMMEND SENATE PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE GRAY
2 TOLLISON FOR HIS DISTINGUISHED SERVICE IN THE MISSISSIPPI SENATE.

3 WHEREAS, Senate President Pro Tempore Grady Franklin "Gray"
4 Tollison has announced that he will not be seeking reelection,
5 which he characterizes as a "self-imposed term limit." He has
6 represented Senate District 9, which includes Lafayette County and
7 portions of Panola County, since 1996 (24 years). In Gray
8 Tollison, the citizens of District 9 have had effective
9 representation from a dedicated public servant with professional
10 legal experience; and

11 WHEREAS, on January 11, 2019, Education Committee Chairman
12 Gray Tollison was elected unanimously as Senate President Pro
13 Tempore. Tollison was selected by the other 51 members of the
14 Mississippi Senate. "Senator Tollison's election by his peers to
15 this leadership position shows the deep respect Senators have for
16 him," Lieutenant Governor Tate Reeves said in a statement. "His
17 24 years of experience in the Legislature and his passion for good
18 public policy make him the right fit to serve as the 'Senators'



19 Senator." The Pro Tem presides in the absence of the Lieutenant
20 Governor and oversees the day-to-day management of the Senate
21 Chamber as Chairman of the Rules Committee. Tollison was already
22 Vice Chairman of Rules. The Senate Pro Tem also is third in line
23 of gubernatorial succession; and

24 WHEREAS, Gray Tollison has served in the Mississippi Senate
25 since 1996. Prior to his election as Senate Pro Tem, he was 10th
26 in seniority out of 52 State Senators. Gray was appointed
27 Chairman of the Senate Education Committee by Lieutenant Governor
28 Tate Reeves in January 2012. He also serves as a member of the
29 Public Health and Welfare Committee, Finance Committee, and
30 Universities and Colleges Committee. Gray previously served as
31 Chairman of the Judiciary Division "B" Committee from 2004-2012
32 under the leadership of Lieutenant Governor Phil Bryant and Amy
33 Tuck, where he led efforts aimed to improve public safety, reduce
34 crime and reform the juvenile justice system; and

35 WHEREAS, Gray has led efforts to achieve significant
36 education reform in Mississippi. In the 2013 legislative session,
37 Tollison was instrumental in the passage of a third-grade literacy
38 promotion act and an improved accountability A-F grading system as
39 well as co-sponsoring legislation to bring high quality early
40 education to Mississippi in the form of Early Learning
41 Collaboratives. In 2014, Tollison worked to meet the challenge of
42 the third-grade reading program by including more reading coaches,
43 adopting a statewide Kindergarten Readiness Assessment and



44 ensuring future elementary teachers are prepared to teach reading.
45 As a result of these reforms, at the time of his retirement
46 Mississippi had its highest graduation rates ever, highest rise in
47 MAEP scores, and was Top 5 nationally in early education.
48 Tollison successfully advocated for more transparent school
49 district ratings, which led to a new grading system for schools
50 based on A, B, C, D and F. The first steps toward choice were
51 taken with the creation of public charter schools and scholarships
52 for students with special needs. After decades of legislators
53 talking about school district consolidation, Gray Tollison took
54 action by pushing for administrative consolidation, significantly
55 reducing the number of districts in Mississippi. The Education
56 Commission of the States awarded Mississippi the 2016 Frank Newman
57 Award for State Innovation for these transformational reforms to
58 improve student learning. Mississippi has made record investments
59 in education spending and enacted reforms to save money,
60 strengthen achievement, and clearly communicate school
61 performance; and

62 WHEREAS, during his legislative tenure, Gray has been
63 recognized for his efforts, including the 2010 Award for
64 Leadership in Juvenile Justice Reform, Mississippi Homebuilders
65 Association's 2008 Legislator of the Year, Mississippi State
66 Troopers Association's 2007 Legislative Leadership Award, and the
67 State Farm Alliance 2006 Seat Belt Champion Award. Gray is a
68 graduate of Rhodes College and the University of Mississippi



69 School of Law. He was a Law Clerk for Mississippi Supreme Court
70 Justice Armis E. Hawkins and worked for United States Senator John
71 C. Stennis in his Washington, D.C., office; and

72 WHEREAS, when Gray worked for United States Senator John C.
73 Stennis, the Senator taught Gray to put the people's best
74 interests first, not politics or special interests. Senator
75 Stennis also taught Gray that building coalitions is the key to
76 achieving last results. As State Senator Tollison learned from
77 Senator Stennis, politics is really about people and working to
78 make our community a better place to live. Gray has put the
79 lessons he learned from Senator Stennis to work for the
80 Mississippi Senate; and

81 WHEREAS, Gray is:

- 82 • A Sixth Generation from Lafayette County;
- 83 • A graduate of Oxford High School, 1982;
- 84 • A graduate of Rhodes College, 1986; and Ole Miss Law
85 School, 1990;
- 86 • A member of Christ Presbyterian Church; and
- 87 • Married to Amanda Tollison and has two children, Grady
88 (18) and Laurel (15); and

89 WHEREAS, President Pro Tempore Gray Tollison's service has
90 been marked by his commitment to success and recognized
91 leadership, sound judgment, civility, courtesy and fairness. He
92 has set the highest standard in all of his many roles: husband,
93 father, businessman, statesman, community leader and leader in the



94 Mississippi Senate, and as a true friend. Gray's service honored
95 both the Mississippi Senate and this great State that he loved and
96 served:

97 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
98 MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby commend and recognize President Pro
99 Tempore Gray Tollison, whose outstanding service enriched everyone
100 with whom he was associated, and we wish Gray and his family much
101 success in his future endeavors.

102 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
103 President Pro Tempore Tollison and made available to the Capitol
104 Press Corps.

