

By: Senator(s) Blackmon, Simmons (13th),
Barnett, Blount, Butler, Caughman, Frazier,
Hopson, Jackson (11th), Jackson (32nd),
Jordan, Norwood, Simmons (12th), Suber,
Witherspoon

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 518

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE PIONEERING
2 ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN JUSTICE OF THE
3 MISSISSIPPI SUPREME COURT, THE HONORABLE REUBEN VINCENT ANDERSON,
4 AND ACKNOWLEDGING HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI.

5 WHEREAS, Mississippi attorney and jurist, the Honorable
6 Reuben Vincent Anderson, has experienced an exponential series of
7 "firsts" in his career, beginning with his becoming the first
8 African American graduate of the University of Mississippi Law
9 School in 1967, being sworn in as the first African American
10 Supreme Court Justice in the State of Mississippi on January 16,
11 1985, a position he held until his retirement from the bench in
12 1991, and serving as the first African American President of The
13 Mississippi Bar Association from 1997 to 1998; and

14 WHEREAS, born in Jackson, Mississippi, on September 16, 1942,
15 to a father who was a bricklayer, and raised in the small
16 community of St. John near Bolton, Mississippi, before permanently
17 relocating to Jackson as an adolescent, Anderson graduated from
18 Tougaloo College in 1965, and chose to pursue a law degree from
19 the University of Mississippi Law School only five years after



20 James Meredith integrated Ole Miss, becoming the second African
21 American student to be admitted to the law school after Cleve
22 McDowell's admission in 1963; and

23 WHEREAS, a consistent public figure in the evolving social,
24 political and economic landscapes of Mississippi for more than
25 four decades, Mr. Anderson, unlike many other African American
26 Mississippians who came of age in the 1960s and left the state for
27 a better quality of life and opportunity, made the conscious
28 decision to remain in his beloved Magnolia State and work to
29 effectuate the necessary changes to improve our capital city and
30 state; and

31 WHEREAS, a young lad who perhaps never dreamed he would one
32 day step into history and become a difference-maker, yet because
33 he chose to live his life demonstrably expressing his values,
34 beliefs and principles, he is today heralded as a man of vision
35 and courage, a vital mentor, role model and precedent-setter; and

36 WHEREAS, Anderson's well-chronicled career was fashioned into
37 existence during his time as a student at Tougaloo College, which
38 served as the epicenter of the Civil Rights Movement in
39 Mississippi, when student activism was at its peak and seeds of
40 idealism were planted that Tougaloo students could change the
41 world; seeds that took root in the fertile soil of Anderson's
42 heart and grew into a majestic oak tree with acorns of service,
43 compassion, wisdom and generosity in abundant supply, that would



shelter those who sought refuge in its selfless offerings of
diplomacy, unassuming thoughtfulness, humility and kindness; and

WHEREAS, having become a part and symbol of the goals of the
Civil Rights Movement, and understanding the danger as well as the
consequential long-term impact of his sacrificial courage during
such a turbulent time of grave racial strife in Mississippi's
history, Mr. Anderson's decision to attend the University of
Mississippi was potentially a life-threatening decision, yet he
persisted and persevered to graduate from law school in 1967 and
immediately joined the staff of the Mississippi NAACP Legal
Defense and Education Fund with his childhood friend and fellow
Holy Ghost Catholic Church classmate Fred Banks, before joining
the private firm of Anderson, Banks, Nichols and Stewart, which
litigated prominent civil rights and school desegregation cases,
including work on the appellate brief to allow the Mississippi
Loyalist Democrats that ability to gain representation at the 1968
Democratic Convention, and presented the motions for new plans of
desegregation in the Southern District of Mississippi, which
eventually led to the landmark decision in *Alexander v. Holmes*;
and

WHEREAS, during the early 1970s, Attorney Anderson in his
unmitigated quest to achieve a level of success that would serve
as a catalyst to encourage others to break through the glass
ceiling of political governance for African Americans when he
announced his candidacy for Jackson City Council, and though he



69 was unsuccessful in his bid, the pebble had been cast upon the
70 water, and the ripple effect of his presence as an agent of change
71 was sending reverberating shockwaves to the masses; and

72 WHEREAS, Anderson's career as a judge began with successive
73 appointments to judgeships beginning in 1976, when he was
74 appointed as judge in the Municipal Court for the City of Jackson,
75 before later receiving a 1977 appointment to the County Court in
76 Hinds County, becoming the first person of color elected
77 countywide when he ran for the county judgeship unopposed that
78 same year, which increased his credibility and reputation as an
79 even-handed issuer of justice to ensure his unopposed election in
80 1981 to the Circuit Court; and

81 WHEREAS, in 1982 Governor William "Bill" Allain appointed him
82 as a Circuit Judge for the 7th Circuit District, which encompassed
83 Hinds and Yazoo Counties, and subsequently, in 1985, Governor
84 Allain elevated Judge Anderson to the Mississippi Supreme Court,
85 to which he was elected twice, and which opened the process for
86 other African Americans to serve in the judiciary, including the
87 likes of his fellow law partner Fred Banks, who would become his
88 successor on both the 7th Circuit Court District and the
89 Mississippi Supreme Court; and

90 WHEREAS, having traveled an uncommon path to reach the
91 pinnacle of sustained success that has garnered him a reputation
92 for his diligence, Judge Anderson has operated as the go-to-guy
93 for his alma mater Tougaloo College, for politicians big and



94 small, for African Americans and Caucasians and for the business
95 community by finessing the mechanics of brokering relationships
96 and getting favorable results which have led to the creation of
97 the Jackson Medical Mall, the E-Center at Jackson State
98 University, the Reuben V. Anderson Prelaw Program at Tougaloo
99 College and the Civil Rights Museum in Mississippi; and

100 WHEREAS, in 1991, Judge Anderson retired from the Supreme
101 Court and joined a private law firm, Phelps Dunbar LLP, where he
102 serves as a partner in the areas of commercial litigation, and
103 regulatory and governmental matters, in addition to serving or
104 having served on the boards of several publicly-traded
105 corporations, including: AT&T, Dallas, Texas (Director);
106 The Kroger Company, Cincinnati, Ohio (Director); MINACT Inc.,
107 Jackson, Mississippi (Director); Kroger; Burlington Resources; and
108 BellSouth, as well as prominent nonprofit organizations, including
109 The Nature Conservancy and the United Way; and

110 WHEREAS, recognized for his years of service in the legal
111 arena, Judge Anderson's successes are attributable to his immense
112 legal talent and consummate professionalism which are further
113 highlighted by the paramount accolades he has amassed throughout
114 his storied career, including, but not limited to: AV Preeminent
115 Peer Review Rated, Martindale-Hubbell; Chambers USA: America's
116 Leading Lawyers for Business Appellate Practice (2010-2020);
117 Arbitration in Jackson (2011-2020); Commercial Litigation
118 (2007-2020); Legal Malpractice Law - Defendants (2011-2020);



Mediation (2011-2020); The Best Lawyers in America; Mid-South
Super Lawyers list (2006-2019); the establishment of Reuben V.
Anderson Pre-Law Society at his alma mater, Tougaloo College;
University of Mississippi School of Law Alumni Hall of Fame
Inductee (2011); The Mississippi Bar Association Lifetime
Achievement Award, (2007); University of Mississippi School of Law
Alumnus of the Year (2005); and University of Mississippi Alumni
Hall of Fame Inductee (1995); and

WHEREAS, one who has perfected his craft by honing his skills
through practice and professional associations with like-minded
individuals, Judge Anderson, who held the Jamie L. Whitten Chair
of Law and Government at the University of Mississippi in 1995,
also holds professional memberships and affiliations with the
following: The Mississippi Bar Association; Hinds County Bar
Association; Magnolia Bar Association; National Bar Association;
United States Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals Bar Association;
United States Supreme Court Bar Association; Chairman of the
Mississippi Civil Rights Museum; Mississippi Economic Council;
State Chamber of Commerce; 100 Black Men of Jackson; Trustee of
Ole Miss Alumni Association; and Trustee and Past Chairman of the
Board of Tougaloo College; and

WHEREAS, the service of Judge Anderson would be without honor
but for the continued support, encouragement and love of his
loving wife, Phyllis Anderson; their three children, Vincent,
Raina and Rosalyn; and two grandchildren, James and Anderson, who



144 endured the daunting struggles that accompany the life of a public
145 official, and who sacrificed countless hours without him in order
146 to allow him to fulfill his obligations; and

147 WHEREAS, it is the policy of this Legislature to pay homage
148 to those individuals of Judge Anderson's caliber, who have served
149 as trailblazing pioneers, and whose contributions merit the same
150 measure of recognition as that experienced by the State of
151 Mississippi as a result of his service to the people of this state
152 with honor and intrepid dignity:

153 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
154 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That
155 we do hereby commend the distinguished and laudable career and
156 exceptional contributions of former Mississippi Supreme Court
157 Justice, the Honorable Reuben V. Anderson, acknowledge his
158 contributions to the State of Mississippi, and express fondest
159 respect and best wishes for continued success in all of his future
160 endeavors.

161 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
162 the Honorable Reuben Vincent Anderson, forwarded to the
163 Mississippi Supreme Court and The Mississippi Bar, and made
164 available to the Capitol Press Corps.

