

By: Senator(s) Butler, Kirby, Barnett, Blackmon, Blackwell, Blount, Boyd, Branning, Bryan, Carter, Caughman, Chassaniol, Chism, DeBar, DeLano, England, Fillingane, Frazier, Harkins, Hill, Hopson, Horhn, Jackson (11th), Jackson (32nd), Johnson, Jordan, McCaughn, McDaniel, McLendon, McMahan, Michel, Moran, Norwood, Parker, Parks, Polk, Seymour, Simmons (12th), Simmons (13th), Sojourner, Sparks, Suber, Tate, Thomas, Thompson, Turner-Ford, Whaley, Wiggins, Witherspoon, Younger

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 587

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION EXTENDING THE DEEPEST SYMPATHY OF THE
2 LEGISLATURE TO THE BEREAVED FAMILY OF FORMER SENATOR BOB M.
3 DEARING OF NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI, AND PAYING TRIBUTE TO HIS CAREER
4 OF PUBLIC AND CHARITABLE SERVICE.

5 WHEREAS, we join the residents of Natchez, Mississippi, and
6 state leaders in mourning the death of former Mississippi State
7 Senator Bob Dearing who passed away on July 30, 2020; and

8 WHEREAS, Senator Robert Montgomery "Bob M." Dearing was born
9 January 26, 1935, in Natchez, the only child of Robert V. and
10 Weenonah Montgomery Dearing. He was a lifelong resident of
11 Natchez. Bob was educated in the Natchez Public Schools and was a
12 1953 graduate of Natchez High School, where he served as President
13 of his junior and senior classes. He also served as President of
14 the "N" club and was on the staff of the school newspaper and
15 yearbook. A talented athlete, Bob M. was a second-team All-Big 8
16 Conference halfback on the football team. Bob led the Big 8 in
17 pass interceptions his junior and senior years and the team in
18 yards per carry his senior year. He earned three letters in that



19 sport and two letters in basketball and baseball. Several of his
20 closest and most enduring friendships were made during this time
21 of his life; and

22 WHEREAS, in the fall of 1953, Bob M. enrolled at Delta State
23 College. He was elected President of his freshman and sophomore
24 classes, Vice President of his junior class and of the Student
25 Government Association (SGA), and was President of the SGA his
26 senior year. Bob attended Delta State on a partial athletic
27 scholarship, playing football for two years and baseball for three
28 years, lettering in both sports. After getting hurt in football,
29 he tried out for cheerleader and cheered the Statesmen from the
30 sidelines his senior year. He graduated from Delta State in 1957
31 with a Bachelor of Science in Education. Bob loved Delta State
32 and the strong friendships he developed there lasted throughout
33 his life. He completed additional post-graduate coursework at the
34 University of Florida, University of North Carolina, and
35 Mississippi College. In 1966, he earned a Master's Degree in
36 Education Administration from the University of Southern
37 Mississippi and received an Honorary Doctoral Degree from Delta
38 State University in 2012; and

39 WHEREAS, Senator Dearing was a member of the Mississippi Army
40 National Guard from 1958-1966 and served on active duty in the
41 United States Army in 1958 and from 1961-1962. He loved sharing
42 stories with his children about his experiences serving his
43 country; and



44 WHEREAS, Senator Dearing began his professional career as a
45 high school Coach and Teacher in Key West, Florida. He returned
46 to his hometown of Natchez in 1958, where he coached, taught and
47 was an elementary school Principal in the Natchez School District.
48 He loved the nine years he spent as an educator, and many of his
49 former students and players still called him "Coach" when they saw
50 him, and would fondly recall with him their memories from the
51 classroom, on the athletic field or the playground, and for some,
52 in the principal's office. Bob relished the role of mentoring and
53 encouraging others. He was a teacher at heart the remainder of
54 his life; and

55 WHEREAS, Senator Dearing left the teaching field in 1966, and
56 took a position as a Senior Associate for Science Research
57 Associates (SRA), the educational subsidiary of International
58 Business Machines (IBM). During the 21 years he worked with the
59 company, Bob continued to make some of his closest and most
60 trusted friendships. After retiring from IBM, he built a
61 successful career as an agent for AFLAC, Inc.; and

62 WHEREAS, always enjoying interaction with others, Bob M. had
63 several side careers through the years. From the mid-1960s
64 through 1979, he officiated high school football and boys and
65 girls basketball in Mississippi and Louisiana. He enjoyed taking
66 part in the athletic action from the new perspective of referee,
67 rather than player. The men who officiated with him were among
68 those he counted as fine friends and he loved the good times they



69 had together. In the early 1980s, his voice was a familiar one on
70 Friday nights as the radio announcer during high school football
71 games for South Natchez and Cathedral. More recently, he taught
72 American Government at Copiah-Lincoln Community College-Natchez
73 and worked part-time in the pro shop at Duncan Park Golf Course.
74 He was a good golfer and liked staying involved in a sport he
75 participated in throughout his life; and

76 WHEREAS, in 1979, Bob M. ran for an open seat in the
77 Mississippi State Senate. Senator Dearing won and represented
78 District 37 in Southwest Mississippi. Senator Dearing was elected
79 to nine four-year terms and served his constituents for 36 years
80 with conscientiousness, honesty, trust and respect. Senator
81 Dearing felt honored to be a member of the State Legislature where
82 he truly enjoyed and took seriously the duties and
83 responsibilities of serving the people. Senator Dearing served
84 during the administrations of seven Governors and six Lieutenant
85 Governors. He loved and respected the body of the State Senate,
86 its traditions, its procedures, and the camaraderie of the men and
87 women with whom he worked in the Capitol. He formed lasting
88 friendships there. He served on numerous committees and was
89 Chairman of the following committees: Highways and
90 Transportation; Municipalities; Fees and Salaries; Oil, Gas, and
91 Other Minerals; Environmental Protection, Conservation and Water
92 Resource; and Forestry. Bob M. was a dedicated public servant who
93 loved helping others. Among the thousands of pieces of mundane



94 and significant legislation that he voted on in the Mississippi
95 Senate, he was most proud of the passage of two bills in
96 particular. They were the 1982 Education Reform Act providing
97 public Kindergartens and the 1987 Four-Lane Highway Program, a
98 long-range highway program to build 1,077 miles of four-lane
99 highways over a 14-year period, which was one of the most
100 comprehensive in the country; and

101 WHEREAS, of the dozens of bills of which he was the sole or
102 lead author and which he introduced and successfully guided to
103 passage in the Mississippi Senate, there were five that were his
104 most satisfying accomplishments: the passage of landmark
105 legislation in 1990 legalizing casino gaming, leading to thousands
106 of jobs along the Mississippi River and the Gulf Coast and
107 billions of dollars in state revenue; early 1990s legislation
108 making retirement income exempt from state income tax; 1997
109 legislation providing \$1,500,000.00 in funding for the Bluff
110 Stabilization Project for the City of Natchez; 2001 legislation to
111 complete the four-laning of Highways 84 and 61 within his Senate
112 district, and bills that strengthen laws against animal cruelty,
113 namely the 2011 legislation making aggravated cruelty to a
114 domesticated dog or cat a felony and the 2018 legislation adding
115 two years of jail time to first-offense dog-fighting convictions
116 and mandating stiffer penalties for second and subsequent
117 offenses; and



118 WHEREAS, Senator Dearing was a genuine, humble man of strong
119 principles and integrity who cared about doing the right thing and
120 was very good at making government work to serve the needs of his
121 community and the people of Mississippi; and

122 WHEREAS, Bob M. was a committed, faithful and steadfast
123 member of First Presbyterian Church in Natchez, where his family
124 has worshiped for many generations. There he taught Sunday School
125 for 37 years and served as an Elder for three terms, a Deacon for
126 four terms, and as Sunday School Superintendent. He loved his
127 church, being with his church family, and giving glory to God; and

128 WHEREAS, he served as President of the Delta State University
129 (DSU) National Alumni Association in 1969, was recognized in 1997
130 as the Outstanding Alumnus of the Year, and was inducted into the
131 Delta State University Alumni Hall of Fame in 2007; and

132 WHEREAS, the Natchez Jaycees selected him as the Outstanding
133 Young Man of the Year in 1965. He received the Distinguished
134 American Award from the Natchez Chapter of the National Football
135 Foundation and Hall of Fame. From 1980-2019, he was the Executive
136 Director of the Gulf States Oil & Gas Invitational Tournament. He
137 served as a board member for many organizations, including the
138 Natchez-Adams County Humane Society, the Natchez Festival of
139 Music, the Margaret Martin Performing Arts Center, the Natchez
140 Little Theater, the Mississippi Arts Fair for the Handicapped,
141 Friends of the Arts in Mississippi, and the Energy Council. He
142 was also a member of Omicron Delta Kappa National Leadership Honor



143 Society, Phi Delta Kappa, the Delta State University Foundation,
144 the Alumni Associations of Delta State University and The
145 University of Southern Mississippi, the National Football
146 Foundation and Hall of Fame, and the Natchez Trace Parkway
147 Association. Always never one to let a good time pass him by, he
148 was a Duke for the Krewe of Phoenix in 1989 and was Grand Marshal
149 of their Mardi Gras Parade in 2019. He was also chosen in 2019 by
150 the Krewe of Killarney to be St. Patrick XXIX and to lead their
151 parade; and

152 WHEREAS, above all, he was devoted to his family. He is
153 loved and deeply missed by them and by his legions of friends and
154 many others who he touched in so many ways. He is survived by his
155 wife of 58 years, Shelley Ditzler Dearing; two daughters,
156 Stephanie Daye Dearing and Clifford Paige Dearing; and one son,
157 Robert Montgomery "Bo" Dearing, Jr.; and

158 WHEREAS, we pay tribute and cherish fondly the memory of this
159 most public-spirited citizen of Mississippi and friend:

160 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
161 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That
162 we do hereby extend the deepest sympathy of the Legislature to the
163 bereaved family of former Senator Bob M. Dearing of Natchez,
164 Mississippi, and pay tribute to his career of public and
165 charitable service.

166 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
167 the surviving family of former Senator Bob Dearing, forwarded to



168 the Alumni Association of Delta State University, and made
169 available to the Capitol Press Corps.

