

By: Senator(s) Horhn, Norwood, Jordan,
Frazier, Simmons (12th), Blount, Jackson
(11th), Butler, Michel, Hopson

To: Rules

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 59

1 A RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE LIFE AND PAYING TRIBUTE TO JAMES
2 CHARLES EVERS, A RESPECTED ENTREPRENEUR, CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND
3 POLITICIAN AND EXTENDING THE SYMPATHY OF THE SENATE TO HIS
4 BEREAVED FAMILY.

5 WHEREAS, it is with deep sadness that we note the passing of
6 James Charles Evers, the first Black-elected mayor of a
7 Mississippi city, an entrepreneur, civil rights activist and
8 politician on July 22, 2020, at the age of 97; and

9 WHEREAS, Charles Evers was born in Decatur, Mississippi, on
10 September 11, 1922, to James and Jessie Wright Evers, three years
11 before his brother, activist Medgar Evers. As a child, he
12 experienced racism and segregation, which later compelled him to
13 challenge the Jim Crow laws that governed the South. Evers served
14 in the United States Army in the Philippines during World War II.
15 Following his military service, he returned to Mississippi. The
16 Evers brothers attended Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College
17 (later Alcorn State University), where they became involved in
18 civil rights activities. In 1951, Charles Evers moved to
19 Philadelphia, Mississippi, where he worked at a family-run funeral



20 home and operated a taxi service, a liquor business, and the Evers
21 Hotel and Lounge, which featured blues bands. After the funeral
22 home advertised on WHOC Radio, Station Owner Howard Cole asked
23 Evers to start hosting a show himself. Evers played blues records
24 and also encouraged his African American listeners to register to
25 vote. His brother, Medgar, took a position with The National
26 Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in
27 Jackson and became Mississippi's most prominent civil rights
28 figure. In Philadelphia, segregationist threats to Charles Evers'
29 businesses and family became so severe that he moved his family to
30 Chicago in 1956; and

31 WHEREAS, in Chicago, Evers was an industrious businessman, as
32 he described in his autobiography, *Have No Fear: A Black Man's*
33 *Fight for Respect in America*. His nightclubs, the Club
34 Mississippi, the Subway Lounge in Chicago, and the Palm Gardens in
35 the suburb of Argo, featured Mississippi-born Blues Artists Muddy
36 Waters, Elmore James and B.B. King. After his brother, Medgar
37 Evers, was assassinated in Jackson on June 12, 1963, Charles Evers
38 returned to his home state, where he succeeded his brother as
39 Field Secretary of the NAACP. Evers organized boycotts, protests
40 and registration campaigns throughout Mississippi; and

41 WHEREAS, in 1969, Evers was named "Man of the Year" by the
42 NAACP. In the same year, he won election as the Mayor of Fayette,
43 Mississippi, the first African American mayor of a racially mixed
44 town in Mississippi in the post-Reconstruction era. Evers was



45 reelected as Mayor of Fayette in 1973 and served as mayor until
46 1981, and again from 1985 to 1989. Evers also ran for Governor in
47 1971 and for a United States Senate seat in 1978. Over the years,
48 Evers became an outspoken proponent for the rights of African
49 Americans. He also served as an Informal Advisor to Presidents
50 John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, George
51 Bush, and Donald Trump; and

52 WHEREAS, in 1973, Mayor Charles Evers of Fayette and B.B.
53 King began to cosponsor concerts at the Medgar Evers Homecoming in
54 honor of the slain civil rights activist. Dozens of blues, soul
55 and gospel acts have been performed at the annual festival during
56 subsequent decades. Charles Evers' formal involvement in blues
57 began in 1954, when he became one of the first African American
58 Deejays in Mississippi at WHOC in Philadelphia. In 1987, he began
59 a long tenure as Manager of WMPR 90.1 FM in Jackson, Mississippi.
60 Under Evers' management, the Jackson radio station became a
61 primary outlet for blues in both its musical programming and
62 announcements, while Evers continued to address various issues on
63 his long-running weekly show, "Let's Talk," including race,
64 politics and current events; and

65 WHEREAS, Evers was known for being outspoken and never
66 shied-away from provocative or controversial conversations. He
67 was a lifelong Democrat until the mid-1970s, when he left the
68 party. He became a Republican in 1989, a controversial decision
69 that added to his complicated legacy; and



70 WHEREAS, in 2012, Evers was inducted by the G.V. (Sonny)
71 Montgomery VA Medical Center into its Wall of Honor. This is a
72 great tribute to some heroic men and women, both during and after
73 their military service; and

74 WHEREAS, Charles Evers leaves to cherish his memory and carry
75 on his legacy 10 children: Patricia Evers Murchison, Carolyn
76 Evers Cockrell (Charles), Velma Charlene Evers Kreel (Nicholas),
77 Rachel Evers Allen (Willie), Sheila Evers Blackmon (Gus), Yvonne
78 Evers, Wanda Evers, Carlos Evers (Carla), Cheryl Brown (Juan) and
79 Tekita Thomas (Will); 24 grandchildren, 26 great-grandchildren,
80 and a host of nieces and nephews; and

81 WHEREAS, we pay tribute and cherish fondly the memory of this
82 most dedicated and public-spirited citizen of Mississippi, who
83 will be missed by all who were fortunate to have known him:

84 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
85 MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby commend the life and pay tribute to
86 the memory of entrepreneur, civil rights activist and politician
87 James Charles Evers and extend the sympathy of the Senate to his
88 bereaved family.

89 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
90 the surviving family of James Charles Evers and made available to
91 the Capitol Press Corps.

