

By: Senator(s) Horhn, Moran, Thompson,
Jackson (32nd)

To: Rules

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 12

1 A RESOLUTION EXTENDING THE RECOGNITION OF THE MISSISSIPPI
2 SENATE TO NOVELIST JESMYN WARD AS THE RECIPIENT OF THE 2021
3 GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN LITERATURE.

4 WHEREAS, the Governor's Arts Awards Program has announced its
5 2021 recipients, which includes Novelist Jesmyn Ward for
6 Excellence in Literature; and

7 WHEREAS, established in 1988, Governor's Arts Awards are
8 given to individuals and organizations to recognize outstanding
9 work in the artistic disciplines, as well as arts-based community
10 development and arts patronage in Mississippi. The awards are
11 presented in partnership with the Governor's Office and signify
12 the important relationship between government and the arts; and

13 WHEREAS, born in 1977 and raised in the coastal Mississippi
14 Town of DeLisle, Jesmyn Ward was a bookworm from an early age. A
15 regular at her school library, she sought out tales featuring
16 strong-willed, smart girls. As she read all of the books she
17 could get her hands on, however, she noticed none of the



18 characters she admired looked like her or came from a place like
19 rural Mississippi; and

20 WHEREAS, after earning Bachelor's and Master's Degrees from
21 Stanford University, Ward considered doing something "practical,"
22 rather than pursue writing. But, the tragic death of her brother,
23 Joshua, was the impetus for pursuing writing full time. In 2005,
24 she received her Masters in Fine Arts in Creative Writing from the
25 University of Michigan, where she won several writing awards. In
26 2008, her first novel, *Where the Line Bleeds*, was published. She
27 says it was inspired by the story of her late brother; and

28 WHEREAS, three years later, her second novel, *Salvage the*
29 *Bones*, was released. After quite a critical reception, the novel
30 surprised the literary world and Jesmyn Ward by winning the
31 National Book Award. In 2013, she published her memoir, *Men We*
32 *Reaped*, about the loss of her brother and four friends, who all
33 died in a four-year span. The memoir received rave reviews and
34 several prize nominations; and

35 WHEREAS, Ward followed the memoir with the anthology, *The*
36 *Fire This Time*, which she edited in response to the deaths of
37 Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown. Her third novel, *Sing,*
38 *Unburied*, *Sing*, made history by winning Ward her second National
39 Book Award. She was the first woman and the first person of color
40 to be a two-time winner of the fiction award. Others include
41 Faulkner, Philip Roth and John Updike; and



WHEREAS, Ward received the Mildred and Harold Strauss Living Award for literary excellence from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2016 and a MacArthur Fellowship, commonly referred to as a "Genius Grant," in 2017; and

WHEREAS, her latest book, *Navigate Your Stars*, is an illustrated version of the stirring commencement speech she delivered at Tulane's graduation in 2018; and

WHEREAS, in September 2020, Jesmyn Ward penned a personal essay for *Vanity Fair* magazine about the COVID crisis and the Black Lives Matter movement that included the shocking news of the death of her partner, Brandon Miller, likely from Coronavirus-related respiratory distress at the age of 33. Most recently, Ward interviewed President Barack Obama about his memoir *A Promised Land*, also for *Vanity Fair*; and

WHEREAS, Jesmyn Ward still lives in her hometown of DeLisle and is a Professor of Creative Writing at Tulane University in New Orleans. In 2017, Ward was added to the state's literary map; and

WHEREAS, it is with great pride that we pay tribute and express appreciation for the talent of a world-class Mississippi writer who has made Mississippi a better place and exemplifies the literature traditions of our great state:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby extend the recognition of the Mississippi Senate to Jesmyn Ward, the recipient of the 2021 Governor's Arts Award for Excellence in Literature, and extend our



67 congratulations to this world-class writer on this auspicious
68 occasion.

69 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
70 Jesmyn Ward as part of the Governor's Arts Awards presentation,
71 and made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

