

By: Senator(s) Simmons (12th), Jackson
(11th), Simmons (13th), Jordan, Barnett,
Butler, Jackson (32nd), Thomas, Blackmon,
Turner-Ford, Horhn, Frazier, Witherspoon

To: Rules

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 23

1 A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE DEEPEST SYMPATHY OF THE
2 MISSISSIPPI SENATE TO THE SURVIVING FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF
3 GREENVILLE, MISSISSIPPI, NATIVE MARY WILSON, CO-FOUNDING MEMBER OF
4 THE LEGENDARY MOTOWN GROUP "THE SUPREMES," AND COMMENDING HER
5 MUSICAL LEGACY.

6 WHEREAS, she was a Motown legend, bestselling author, music
7 activist, former U.S. cultural ambassador and co-founding member
8 of "The Supremes." Greenville, Mississippi, native Mary Wilson,
9 best known as the longest-running member of the group that she
10 made famous, alongside Diana Ross and Florence Ballard, and later,
11 Cindy Birdsong, passed away on February 8, 2021, at her home in
12 Henderson, Nevada. She was 76; and

13 WHEREAS, as we recognize Black History Month, we honor an
14 original/founding member of The Supremes, who changed the face of
15 pop music to become a trendsetter. The Supremes broke down
16 social, racial, and gender barriers, which all started with the
17 wild success of their first number-one song. Formed in Detroit as
18 The Primettes in 1959, The Supremes were Motown's most successful
19 act of the 1960s, scoring 12 No. 1 singles. They also continue to



20 reign as America's most successful vocal group to date. Their
21 influence not only carries on in contemporary R&B, soul and pop,
22 they also helped pave the way for mainstream success by Black
23 artists across all genres; and

24 WHEREAS, Mary achieved an unprecedented 12 number-one hits
25 with five of them being consecutive from 1964-1965. Those songs
26 are "Where Did Our Love Go," "Baby Love," "Come See About Me,"
27 "Stop! In the Name of Love" and "Back in My Arms Again" according
28 to *Billboard Magazine*. In 2018, *Billboard Magazine* celebrated the
29 60th anniversary of Motown with a list of "The Hot 100's Top
30 Artists of All Time," where The Supremes ranked at number 16 and
31 still remain the number-1 female-recording group of all time; and

32 WHEREAS, January 21, 2021, marked the 60th anniversary of the
33 day The Supremes signed with Motown in 1961. Mary was leading the
34 celebration of the 60th anniversary of The Supremes; and

35 WHEREAS, the singer's story began on March 6, 1944, in
36 Greenville, Mississippi, where she was the eldest of three
37 children born to Sam and Johnnie Mae Wilson. The family would
38 relocate to Detroit's Brewster-Douglass Projects in the 1950s,
39 where Wilson first met future fellow Supreme, Ballard, in
40 elementary school. The two would eventually join forces with
41 Diana Ross and high school friend Betty McGlown to form the
42 singing group "The Primettes," so named for the male singing group
43 then-led by Eddie Kendricks named the "Primes." Barbara Martin
44 replaced McGlown in 1960, and the quartet became focused on



45 getting signed by the then-upstart label Motown. They were
46 initially turned down by Berry Gordy, an anecdote Wilson recounted
47 when sharing the story of the group's eventual signing; and

48 WHEREAS, rebranded as The Supremes, the group released
49 several singles in the next few years, but with little success.
50 Martin would ultimately leave the group to begin a family in early
51 1962, just before the remaining trio would be paired with the
52 hit-making songwriting team of Holland-Dozier-Holland (Lamont
53 Dozier and brothers Brian and Eddie Holland), who helped Wilson,
54 Ballard and Ross score their first chart hit in late 1963 with
55 "When the Lovelight Starts Shining Through His Eyes," which peaked
56 at 23 on the *Billboard* pop chart; and

57 WHEREAS, the following year brought The Supremes their first
58 No. 1 hit with the now-classic "Where Did Our Love Go," released
59 in August 1964. That hit would also bring the trio international
60 fame, as it reached No. 3 in the U.K. The hit would prove a
61 breakthrough, as a string of No. 1 hits followed, including "Baby
62 Love," "Come See About Me," "Stop! In the Name of Love" and "Back
63 in My Arms Again," followed, cementing The Supremes' stardom with
64 five consecutive No. 1 hits on the *Billboard* charts, the first
65 group in history to do so, and it would be the first of many
66 records broken by the original trio, who, with 12 number-one hits
67 on the *Billboard* Hot 100, still holds the record for the most No.
68 1 hits among American groups, including hits like "I Hear a
69 Symphony," and "You Can't Hurry Love." The consistent triumphs



70 would make The Supremes one of the best-selling girl groups of all
71 time; and

72 WHEREAS, Mary's best known post-Supremes success would come
73 via the bestselling *Dreamgirl: My Life as a Supreme*, the first of
74 several books she co-authored. *Dreamgirl* was followed by the
75 memoir *Supreme Faith: Someday We'll Be Together* (1990), and 2019's
76 *Supreme Glamour*, a book about the group's style. In 2019, Wilson
77 also briefly appeared as a contestant on *Dancing With the Stars*.
78 As of 2021, she was still teasing new projects via her YouTube
79 channel; and

80 WHEREAS, Wilson is preceded in death by her son, Rafael. She
81 is survived by her sons, Pedro, Jr., and Willie; daughter,
82 Turkessa; 10 grandchildren and one great-grandchild; and

83 WHEREAS, as the world awakened to the news of Wilson's
84 passing, tributes poured in. Motown Records founder Berry Gordy
85 was among the first to recognize one of his label's biggest
86 success stories: "I was extremely shocked and saddened to hear of
87 the passing of a major member of the Motown family, Mary Wilson of
88 the Supremes. The Supremes were always known as the 'sweethearts
89 of Motown.' She was quite a star in her own right and over the
90 years continued to work hard to boost the legacy of the Supremes.
91 Mary Wilson was a trailblazer, and will be deeply missed":

92 NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
93 MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby express the deepest sympathy of the
94 Mississippi Senate to the surviving family and friends of



95 Greenville, Mississippi, native Mary Wilson, co-founding member of
96 the legendary Motown group "The Supremes," and commend her musical
97 legacy.

98 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
99 Mary Wilson's surviving family, forwarded to the Mississippi Arts
100 Commission and be made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

