

By: Senator(s) Norwood, Blount, Frazier

To: Rules

## SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 54

1 A RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE 40-YEAR CAREER OF *THE CLARION*  
2 *LEDGER* CAPITOL CORRESPONDENT JIMMIE GATES.

3 WHEREAS, Jimmie Gates of Jackson, Mississippi, retired as a  
4 Journalist with *The Clarion Ledger* after 40 years on December 1,  
5 2020. He was a well-known and respected Capitol Correspondent and  
6 served as a bridge between the Legislature, the newspaper and the  
7 community; and

8 WHEREAS, Jimmie Gates worked nearly every beat at *The Clarion*  
9 *Ledger* and its former sister paper, the *Jackson Daily News*, since  
10 his byline first appeared four decades ago. He began writing  
11 community features, then took on minority affairs as one of only a  
12 handful of African-American Journalists at the paper in the 1980s.  
13 He covered county and city governments, crisscrossed the halls of  
14 the Mississippi State Capitol and settled into a role focused on  
15 courts and criminal justices; and

16 WHEREAS, through it all, he honed a reputation for fairness,  
17 for hard work and a gentle interviewing style, for colorful



18 legislative and courtroom tales and a deep pool of sources that he  
19 was happy to share with younger colleagues; and

20 WHEREAS, Gates (65) dreamed of becoming a journalist growing  
21 up in Jackson during the Civil Rights Movement. The Jackson State  
22 University graduate landed a staff job at the *Jackson Daily News*,  
23 the afternoon paper, in 1981 following an internship. He admits  
24 to being slightly star-struck joining the journalists he grew up  
25 reading, back when he would pore through the paper after his  
26 grandfather was finished with it; and

27 WHEREAS, more than a year later came another formative moment  
28 for a young Gates: *The Clarion Ledger* won its only Pulitzer Prize  
29 for a series of stories that led to education reform. Gates was  
30 "just a green rookie" then, but it was nevertheless "great to be  
31 part of that atmosphere for a young reporter," he said. That  
32 series led to the passage of the landmark "Education Reform Act of  
33 1982." As a minority affairs reporter, Gates played a key role in  
34 trying to show "that we did care about the African American  
35 community; and

36 WHEREAS, after stints in a number of other beats over the  
37 years, Gates said he eventually found court reporting as his  
38 calling. He loved covering the high-profile trials, he said,  
39 trying to place his readers inside the tense and emotion-filled  
40 courtrooms, always striving to "walk that tightrope" of showing  
41 fairness to both sides; and



42           WHEREAS, when he was not in a courtroom, Gates could often be  
43 found working the halls of the Capitol, a place where seemingly  
44 everyone knew his name and wanted to say hello. In 2021, he  
45 covered two major policy changes he said he was surprised to see  
46 finally happen in Mississippi: a new state flag and voters'  
47 approval of medical marijuana; and

48           WHEREAS, Representative Alyce Clarke has served since 1985  
49 and got to know Gates well over the years. Gates was a reporter  
50 "who was willing to tell it like it is," she said, even if the  
51 truth was uncomfortable. But she said he was also willing to tell  
52 positive news stories about lawmakers and the policies they  
53 passed. "He was somebody really easy to talk to, someone nice to  
54 talk to, and someone interested in the good things that were going  
55 on," Clarke said; and

56           WHEREAS, Jimmie Gates was a masterful interviewer, former  
57 colleagues said, eliciting revelatory information from reluctant  
58 sources, thanks to his gentle and kind approach. He never raised  
59 his voice with a source - a rarity in any high-stress newsroom  
60 environment; and

61           WHEREAS, Gates said in retirement he plans to do some  
62 freelancing and work on a book. Jimmie is married to wife Pattie  
63 Gates and has a daughter, April.

64           WHEREAS, it is with great pride that we pay tribute to a  
65 Mississippi Journalist known for fairness and hard work whose



66 positive reporting contributed to his community and to the State  
67 of Mississippi:

68         NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF  
69 MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby recognize the 40-year career of *The*  
70 *Clarion Ledger* Capitol Correspondent, Jimmie Gates, commend his  
71 fair and balanced reporting style and extend our best wishes to  
72 Jimmie and his family for future successes.

73         BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to  
74 Jimmie Gates, forwarded to *The Clarion Ledger* Executive Editor and  
75 made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

