

By: Representative Miles

To: Rules

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 122

1 A RESOLUTION COMMENDING AND EXPRESSING APPRECIATION TO DR.
2 THOMAS DOBBS FOR HIS INVALUABLE SERVICE FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE
3 STATE OF MISSISSIPPI DURING HIS TIME AS STATE HEALTH OFFICER,
4 ESPECIALLY FOR STEADFASTLY LEADING THE STATE THROUGH THE DAUNTING
5 CHALLENGES OF THE COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS.

6 WHEREAS, Dr. Thomas Dobbs, Mississippi's State Health
7 Officer, recently announced that he will be resigning from that
8 position at the end of July of this year after leading the State
9 Department of Health through one of the most difficult and
10 challenging periods in the agency's history; and

11 WHEREAS, a native of Haleyville in northwest Alabama, Dr.
12 Dobbs went east to Atlanta to get a Bachelor of Science degree in
13 applied physics from Emory University in May 1992, then returned
14 to Alabama where he earned a Doctor of Medicine degree from the
15 University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) in May 1996 and a Master
16 of Public Health degree in epidemiology from UAB in May 2000, and
17 completed an internal medicine residency program at UAB in June
18 2000, and he is board certified in both internal medicine and
19 infectious diseases; and



20 WHEREAS, Dr. Dobbs worked as an internal medicine and
21 infectious disease physician in Laurel and Hattiesburg before
22 beginning his career at the Department of Health in 2008, where he
23 served in numerous roles, including District Health Officer for
24 Districts 7 and 8 from July 2008 to July 2012, State
25 Epidemiologist from August 2012 to September 2016, state TB
26 consultant in 2009, and infectious disease consultant from
27 September 2016 to the present; and

28 WHEREAS, after working as Chief Medical Officer and Vice
29 President for Quality at South Central Regional Medical Center in
30 Laurel from September 2016 to June 2018, Dr. Dobbs returned to the
31 Department of Health to serve as Deputy State Health Officer from
32 July 2018 to December 2018, when he was appointed by the State
33 Board of Health to head the agency as State Health Officer; and

34 WHEREAS, Dr. Dobbs had only been State Health Officer for a
35 little more than a year when he was abruptly thrust into dealing
36 with the greatest public health crisis of our generation and this
37 century as the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 spread
38 unchecked across the globe in a worldwide pandemic and arrived in
39 Mississippi in March 2020 and began rapidly infecting, sickening,
40 hospitalizing and killing our citizens; and

41 WHEREAS, Dr. Dobbs had to deal with the enormous and
42 ever-increasing stress and strain on the state's health care
43 system with diminished resources at the Department of Health as
44 COVID-19 cases ran rampant and hospitals overflowed, which



45 threatened to totally overwhelm hospitals and health care
46 providers, and he led a team of professionals who quickly
47 developed a plan to combat the dire consequences of the pandemic,
48 lessen the severity of its massive impact on the health care
49 system and the people of the state, and confront the numerous
50 logistical and messaging challenges of the pandemic; and

51 WHEREAS, working tirelessly and incessantly through
52 relentless wave after wave of skyrocketing COVID-19 cases and
53 deaths, when rising hope would often give way to despair as the
54 pandemic continued with its deadly assault throughout our state,
55 Dr. Dobbs stayed calm and focused on the many demanding tasks
56 facing him and delivered a consistent message about what needed to
57 be done to stay safe and most effectively reduce the chances of
58 contracting COVID-19 and spreading it to others; and

59 WHEREAS, Dr. Dobbs was drawn to public health early in his
60 life, and he was already a veteran of public health campaigns when
61 Mississippi had its first case of COVID-19, many of them
62 undertaken after he became the State Epidemiologist in 2012, and
63 that background together with his education and wealth of
64 experience with infectious diseases, made him highly qualified and
65 the right person at the right time to address the immense
66 challenges of dealing with the pandemic; and

67 WHEREAS, colleagues of Dr. Dobbs say that his medical
68 background and temperament have made him superbly well suited for
69 his role as the leading public health voice in the state, being



70 someone who is well-spoken and has the courage of his convictions,
71 and who collaborates instead of dictates as a manager, persuades
72 instead of criticizes as a leader, is an exceptional listener
73 whether talking to a patient or a peer, is open to ideas from
74 others and builds consensus while staying on task; and

75 WHEREAS, Dr. Dobbs is known for always being available and
76 responsive to others seeking his advice and counsel no matter how
77 busy he is, as one who leads by example, and as a collaborative,
78 cooperative and communicative partner with others, and he is
79 highly respected for his professionalism, sterling personality and
80 stellar leadership throughout his tenure at the Department of
81 Health, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

82 WHEREAS, Dr. Dobbs genuinely cares about other people and he
83 is known as a consummate physician who has exceptional skills with
84 patients, having a masterful ability to communicate with them
85 without lecturing, talk with anyone on their level, and simplify
86 medical issues to be understandable by patients and the public,
87 and by his actions and words throughout the pandemic, it appeared
88 that Dr. Dobbs considered every person in Mississippi to be his
89 patient and wanted to take care of them in the best way possible;
90 and

91 WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has been the defining event of
92 Dr. Dobbs' tenure as State Health Officer and he has been the
93 public face of the Department of Health while leading Mississippi
94 through the pandemic, but at the same time he was working



95 tirelessly to ensure that the department effectively carried out
96 its many other duties and responsibilities to the public, and he
97 is leaving the department in a better place than when he arrived;
98 and

99 WHEREAS, Dr. Dobbs' passion has always been infectious
100 disease treatment and he has served in various roles related to
101 that field, including medical director for the AIDS Healthcare
102 Foundation clinic in Jackson, clinical consultant for the
103 Southeastern National TB Center in Florida, and infectious disease
104 consultant for several hospitals in Mississippi; and

105 WHEREAS, before joining the Department of Health, Dr. Dobbs
106 held numerous faculty positions at colleges and universities
107 throughout the Southeast, including at the University of
108 Mississippi Medical Center, UAB and the University of Southern
109 Mississippi, and after two intense years of leading Mississippi
110 through the pandemic, he plans to return to the clinical side of
111 medicine, particularly the communicable disease treatment of
112 patients, and also step back into academia and teach and train
113 health care professionals about public health and infectious
114 diseases; and

115 WHEREAS, Dr. Dobbs has been a wonderful asset to the State of
116 Mississippi and its citizens during his service and leadership as
117 State Health Officer, a class act and a steady voice who guided us
118 during our time of crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic, a true
119 public servant who devoted himself to the safety and health of all



120 Mississippians and did about ten years of work during the past two
121 years, and his many contributions to public health are greatly
122 appreciated by the people of this state and he will be missed at
123 the Department of Health, but we know that he will continue
124 serving the citizens of Mississippi in other valuable ways as he
125 moves into the next phase of his life and career:

126 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
127 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, That we heartily
128 commend and express our appreciation to Dr. Thomas Dobbs for his
129 invaluable service, dedication, commitment and tireless work for
130 the people of the State of Mississippi during his time as State
131 Health Officer, especially for steadfastly leading the state
132 through the daunting challenges of the COVID-19 public health
133 crisis, and we extend to him our sincere wishes for the best in
134 all of his future endeavors, including having more time to spend
135 with his wife, Dr. Kim Dobbs, and their two sons, who have been
136 his rocks of support as he was devoting so much of his time to the
137 people of our state during the pandemic.

138 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
139 furnished to Dr. Thomas Dobbs, the State Department of Health and
140 to the members of the Capitol Press Corps.

