

By: Senator(s) Hill, Branning, Caughman,
DeBar, Frazier, Horhn, McDaniel, Norwood,
Simmons (12th), Simmons (13th), Sparks,
Thomas

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 505

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE LEGACY OF NFL HALL OF
2 FAME RUNNING BACK WALTER PAYTON ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEDICATION
3 OF "WALTER PAYTON FIELD" IN COLUMBIA, MISSISSIPPI.

4 WHEREAS, we join the citizens of Columbia, Mississippi, in
5 recognizing the legacy of Walter Payton; and

6 WHEREAS, the field that bears the name of arguably the most
7 famous Chicago Bear, NFL Hall of Fame Running Back, Walter Payton,
8 will forever be enshrined at Gardner Stadium. Walter and his
9 brother, Eddie, played the sport they loved for the "Wildcats" of
10 Columbia High School in Columbia, Mississippi. A statue of the
11 man simply known as "Sweetness" now greets visitors in the home
12 plaza welcoming them to Walter Payton Field; and

13 WHEREAS, history was made when the newly built Walter Payton
14 Field at Gardner Stadium opened on September 23, 2021. The
15 Columbia School District honored the legacy of NFL Hall of Famer
16 and Columbia High School Running Back, Walter Payton, with the
17 Payton family and former teammates in attendance. Teammates from
18 Columbia High School, Jackson State University and the NFL came to



19 pay tribute to the outstanding person that Walter Payton was both
20 on and off the field; and

21 WHEREAS, Walter Payton's legacy includes having
22 record-breaking careers at Jackson State University and the
23 Chicago Bears. He broke the NFL record for most rushing yards and
24 played in the 1986 Super Bowl, won by the Chicago Bears. For his
25 humanitarian efforts, the NFL named its "Man of the Year" after
26 him; and

27 WHEREAS, Walter's brother, Eddie Payton, also a high school
28 football standout from Columbia and JSU, believes that his brother
29 is the best person for whom the new state-of-the-art field at
30 Gardner Stadium should be named. He was a featured speaker at the
31 ceremony. When Walter and Eddie played football at Columbia High
32 School, they both wore number 22 and both later played football at
33 Jackson State University, where Walter changed his jersey to
34 number 34; and

35 WHEREAS, Walter's brother, Eddie, and his sister, Pam Curry,
36 were also on hand in cutting the ribbon for the opening ceremony.
37 Bud Holmes, the longtime agent of both Payton brothers, attended
38 along with many of their teammates he represented during their
39 time in professional football. Robert Brazile, a fellow NFL Hall
40 of Fame inductee who played with the Houston Oilers, shared how
41 much this group of teammates and friends enjoy getting together,
42 especially having an opportunity to honor their peer and friend.
43 Other speakers for the opening ceremony were: Architect Jamie



44 Wier, Coach Chip Bilderback, Coach Charles Boston, Matt Pace of
45 Codaray Construction, Mitchell Williams with the Fellowship of
46 Christian Athletes, Representative Ken Morgan, Senator Angela
47 Hill, and Mayor Justin McKenzie. A short documentary made by the
48 Columbia High School Broadcast Journalism Class, featuring clips
49 of Walter Payton and interviews with Eddie Payton and Coach
50 Boston, was played on the stadium's new jumbotron; and

51 WHEREAS, the bronze sculpture of Walter Payton, created by
52 nationally recognized Artist and Columbia resident, Ben Watts, is
53 now featured prominently at the main entrance of the new stadium;
54 and

55 WHEREAS, Walter Jerry Payton was born on July 25, 1954, in
56 Columbia, Mississippi. Walter was one of three children born to
57 Edward and Alyne Payton. Young Payton played a number of sports
58 with his brother, Eddie. Payton attended John Jefferson High
59 School (now Jefferson Middle School), an all-black school for his
60 first three years of high school. Then in his senior year, he was
61 one of the African-American students who integrated formerly
62 all-white Columbia High School. Payton played football all four
63 years of his high school career. He then followed his brother,
64 Eddie, to play college football at Jackson State University in
65 Jackson, Mississippi. Payton excelled at Jackson State, rushing
66 for more than 3,500 yards and breaking into the National College
67 Athletic Association (NCAA) record books by scoring 65 rushing
68 touchdowns. Payton entered the 1975 NFL draft and was the 4th



69 overall pick by the Chicago Bears. Payton's greatest year was in
70 1985, where he gained more than 1,500 rushing yards and led the
71 Chicago Bears to a 15-1 regular season record. Payton then led
72 the Chicago Bears in becoming Super Bowl XX Champions. Payton
73 continued having successful seasons with the Chicago Bears
74 throughout the rest of his career. He played 13 seasons with the
75 Chicago Bears, finishing his career with 16,726 rushing yards and
76 scoring 110 touchdowns. Throughout his career, he amassed
77 numerous honors, including nine-time Pro Bowl Selection
78 (1976-1980, 1983-1986), nine-time All-Pro Selection (1976-1980,
79 1983-1986), NFL MVP (1977), two-time NFC Player of the Year (1977,
80 1985), Bert Bell Award (1977), Pro Bowl MVP (1978), and Super Bowl
81 XX Champion (1985). Walter Payton retired in 1988 and was
82 inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame five years later in
83 1993. The Chicago Bears also retired his number 34 jersey
84 indicating he will always be known as one of the greatest running
85 backs in football history; and

86 WHEREAS, the opening of the new Walter Payton Field was
87 certainly a remarkable event. Columbia schools were able to
88 witness a momentous occasion that will not be forgotten. The
89 excitement, the atmosphere, the energy and the sense of unity were
90 historic; and

91 WHEREAS, it is with great pride that we commend the legacy of
92 a great Mississippi athlete who stated, "We are stronger together
93 than we are alone":



94 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
95 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That
96 we do hereby recognize the legacy of NFL Hall of Fame Running Back
97 Walter Payton on the occasion of the dedication of "Walter Payton
98 Field" in Columbia, Mississippi, and extend to the athletes,
99 alumni, leaders and educators of Columbia High School our best
100 wishes for future success.

101 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
102 the family of Walter Payton, his former Coach Charles Boston,
103 Columbia School Superintendent Jason Harris, forwarded to the
104 Columbia School Board, and made available to the Capitol Press
105 Corps.

