

By: Senator(s) Simmons (12th), Jackson (11th), Barnett, Kirby, Jordan, Frazier, Seymour, Wiggins, Norwood, England, McCaughn, Thompson, Suber, Butler (38th), Simmons (13th), Barrett, Tate, Blackwell, Fillingane, Horhn, McLendon, Thomas

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 551

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION EXTENDING THE DEEPEST SYMPATHY OF THE  
2 LEGISLATURE TO THE BEREAVED FAMILY OF FORMER STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
3 AND STATE SENATOR VERNON DELMA FURNISS OF RENA LARA, MISSISSIPPI,  
4 AND PAYING TRIBUTE TO HIS CAREER OF PUBLIC AND CHARITABLE SERVICE.

5 WHEREAS, we join the residents of the Mississippi Senate  
6 District 11 (Coahoma, Quitman and Tunica Counties) and state  
7 leaders in mourning the death of former Mississippi State  
8 Representative and State Senator Vernon Delma Furniss. Senator  
9 Furniss was a member of the Mississippi House of Representatives  
10 from 1984 to 1993 and a member of the Mississippi State Senate  
11 from 1993 until his retirement in December 2003. The 88-year-old  
12 passed away on January 31, 2022; and

13 WHEREAS, one of ten children, Vernon Delma Furniss was born  
14 in Belen, Mississippi, on July 30, 1934, to Alvy George and  
15 Gertrude Mary Alice Ferguson Furniss. According to Delma's  
16 mother, when Delma was two years old, his family relocated from  
17 the land they were renting near Marks, to Rena Lara, Mississippi.  
18 The Furniss family became proud participants in President Franklin  
19 D. Roosevelt's Resettlement Administration Farmers Security



20 Program. The Furniss' were provided with a small acreage (part of  
21 the old Walnut Grove Plantation) to work in exchange for the  
22 option to purchase the land. The payment for the farm was \$212.45  
23 each year for 40 years, and the Furniss' managed to pay for the  
24 farm several years early. Delma loved the land and his community  
25 in Rena Lara; and

26 WHEREAS, Delma graduated from Sunflower School and later  
27 helped establish a nonprofit Commission through the automobile tag  
28 program to fund maintenance of the school after it closed. Delma  
29 (or as his coworkers on the railroad affectionately called him  
30 "Fireball") was a believer in education. He received a Bachelor's  
31 Degree in English, History and Political Science from Delta State  
32 University, earning a perfect 4.0 GPA while working full time on  
33 the Illinois Central Railroad. He went on to earn a Master's  
34 Degree in History from the University of Mississippi, again with a  
35 4.0 GPA. Delma held memberships in the Delta State University and  
36 the University of Mississippi Alumni Associations, the Clarksdale-  
37 Coahoma Chamber of Commerce, Phi Kappa Phi, Pi Gamma Mu, Phi Alpha  
38 Theta, and Lambda Iota Tau Fraternities; and

39 WHEREAS, Delma was devoted to his wife, Edith "Edie" Roark.  
40 They were married for over 50 years, until her passing in 2004.  
41 Delma wanted to honor Edie, who received her LPN Degree at age 31  
42 and her RN Degree at age 34, overcoming many obstacles to receive  
43 her education. To honor Edie, Delma set up the Edie Furniss LPN  
44 Scholarship in 1993 to be awarded annually to a graduate of



45 Coahoma Community College who is over 25 years of age and who has  
46 overcome many obstacles to receive his or her degree. Edie and  
47 Delma had four children, who benefited from their mom and dad's  
48 love of family and education. Delma loved God and his church  
49 family as well. He attended Rena Lara Baptist Church, where he  
50 served as a Deacon since 1975; and

51 WHEREAS, while his career on the railroad was winding down,  
52 Delma was building up steam pursuing a career in the Legislature  
53 where he could make a positive difference for fellow  
54 Mississippians. Upon his retirement from the Senate, Senate  
55 Resolution 109 said the following about Senator Delma Furniss:  
56 "Senator Furniss served in the House of Representatives from 1984-  
57 1993, and has served in the Senate from 1993 to the present, and  
58 has taken a leading role in virtually every meaningful economic  
59 development, agriculture, health care and progressive education  
60 program in his district during his tenure; he has been a champion  
61 of veterans' rights, taking an extremely active role in the  
62 development of the States Veterans' Homes, the Mississippi Vietnam  
63 Monument Commission and the Youth Challenge Program operated at  
64 Camp Shelby; took a particular interest in assisting the  
65 Mississippi Firefighters Memorial Burn Center at Delta Regional  
66 Hospital by sponsoring legislation creating a special trust fund  
67 for burn victims. Senator Furniss served with distinction, and we  
68 will miss his friendship"; and



69           WHEREAS, Delma's colleagues in the Mississippi State  
70 Legislature thought so much of his service in general and more  
71 specifically with his tireless efforts on the Highway 61 four lane  
72 project that they dedicated the Hospitality Center in his honor.  
73 On March 13, 2003, the State of Mississippi declared that "The  
74 state hospitality station constructed and located at the  
75 intersection of U.S. Highway 49 and U.S. Highway 61 in Coahoma  
76 County is designated and shall be known as the Senator Delma  
77 Furniss Hospitality Station"; and

78           WHEREAS, Delma is survived by his four children: Jerry  
79 Furniss (Shannon), Dr. Jan Furniss (Bob Lowry), Jeff Furniss  
80 (Laurel), and Julia Furniss-Roberts (Larry Roberts);  
81 grandchildren: Ben Lowry, Sam Lowry, Ashley Smith, Candace  
82 Goodman, Jasmine Gagnon, Joshua Delma Furniss, Jacob Furniss,  
83 Shaun Bramlett, Derek Bramlett, Edie Furniss, Lesli Stearns, Paige  
84 Furniss, Bobby Jahrig and Cody Jahrig; and great-grandchildren:  
85 Connor Goodman, Sidney Gagnon, Dylan Bramlett and Rayna Bramlett.  
86 Delma was predeceased by his wife, Edith Roark Furniss; his second  
87 wife, Doris Evelyn Furniss; parents, Gertie and A.G. Furniss; and  
88 nine siblings: Hubert Furniss, George Furniss, Edward Furniss,  
89 Herman Furniss, W.G. Furniss, "Little" Howard Furniss, Juanita  
90 Anderson, Annie Pearl Russell and Isabel Dill; and

91           WHEREAS, Senator Furniss felt honored to be a member of the  
92 State Legislature where he truly enjoyed and took seriously the  
93 duties and responsibilities of serving the people. He loved and



94 respected the body of the State Senate, its traditions, its  
95 procedures, and the camaraderie of the men and women with whom he  
96 worked in the Capitol. He formed lasting friendships there.  
97 Senator Furniss was a genuine, humble man of strong principles and  
98 integrity who cared about doing the right thing and was very good  
99 at making government work to serve the needs of his community and  
100 the people of Mississippi; and

101 WHEREAS, Delma loved God, his family, his church, his  
102 community, and the State of Mississippi, and we pay tribute and  
103 cherish fondly the memory of this most public-spirited citizen of  
104 Mississippi and friend:

105 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF  
106 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That  
107 we do hereby extend the deepest sympathy of the Legislature to the  
108 bereaved family of former State Representative and State Senator  
109 Vernon Delma Furniss of Rena Lara, Mississippi, and pay tribute to  
110 his career of public and charitable service.

111 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to  
112 the surviving family of former Senator Vernon Delma Furniss,  
113 forwarded to the Clarksdale-Coahoma County Chamber of Commerce,  
114 and made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

