

By: Senator(s) Frazier, Barnett, Branning,
Butler (38th), DeBar, Hopson, Horhn, Jackson
(11th), McCaughn, McDaniel, Norwood, Simmons
(12th), Suber, Thomas

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 566

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE SCHOOL
2 OF LAW DEAN PATRICIA BENNETT ON THE OCCASION OF HER RETIREMENT.

3 WHEREAS, the Honorable Patricia Bennett, well-known and
4 highly respected Dean of Mississippi College School of Law, has
5 announced her intention to retire from her position as Dean in
6 June of 2022, after three decades of superior leadership and
7 exceptional service to the acclaimed educational institution and
8 the legal profession; and

9 WHEREAS, raised in Scott County by a respected family in
10 Forest, Mississippi, she learned from her parents at an early age
11 the invaluable lesson that hard work and education are the keys to
12 success; and

13 WHEREAS, after demonstrating her scholarly talents during
14 high school, Dean Bennett attended and graduated from Tougaloo
15 College, where she excelled in her academic subjects and was
16 active in student life; and

17 WHEREAS, Dean Bennett continued her formal education and
18 training at the Mississippi College School of Law, graduating in



19 1979 with a superior academic record and a wide network of
20 colleagues with whom she continued to interact over the course of
21 her professional life; and

22 WHEREAS, Dean Bennett took and passed the Mississippi Bar
23 Examination and was admitted to practice law in the State and
24 Federal Courts of Mississippi; and

25 WHEREAS, Dean Bennett served as Assistant District Attorney
26 for Hinds and Yazoo Counties, where she began her criminal law
27 practice and demonstrated her courtroom skills; and

28 WHEREAS, Dean Bennett served as a Special Assistant Attorney
29 General with the Mississippi Attorney General's Office in Jackson,
30 providing superior representation on behalf of the State of
31 Mississippi; and

32 WHEREAS, Dean Bennett served her country in the military as a
33 Judge Advocate Officer in the United States Army Reserve and in
34 the Mississippi National Guard when she answered the call to duty
35 and provided selfless and honorable service; and

36 WHEREAS, Dean Bennett served in the Department of Justice as
37 an Assistant United States Attorney, where she prosecuted a series
38 of high-profile and challenging cases ranging from murders to
39 white-collar crimes, securing convictions which ensured the fair
40 administration of justice and the safety of the citizenry; and

41 WHEREAS, Dean Bennett joined the faculty of Mississippi
42 College School of Law in 1989 and expertly taught a generation of
43 law students Trial Practice, Mediation, Advocacy, Criminal



44 Procedure, Client Interviewing and Counseling, Litigation
45 Technology, and Criminal Law, and also taught as a visiting
46 Professor at Harvard Law School, Emory Law School and the
47 University of Arkansas at Little Rock Law School; and

48 WHEREAS, Dean Bennett was selected as Mississippi College's
49 Professor of the Year, the highest teaching award given by the
50 University and delivered the convocation address for Mississippi
51 College; and

52 WHEREAS, Dean Bennett served as the Director of the
53 Litigation and Dispute Resolution Center at Mississippi College
54 School of Law, where she organized courses designed to promote
55 effective litigation skills and brought speakers to the law school
56 to provide a rich commentary for the law students such as U.S.
57 Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts and thus elevated the
58 standing of the Mississippi College School of Law in the legal
59 community; and

60 WHEREAS, Dean Bennett chaired every important Faculty
61 Committee and supported numerous speaker programs, student
62 activities, and alumni events; and

63 WHEREAS, Dean Bennett agreed to serve as Interim Dean of
64 Mississippi College School of Law in December of 2016, following
65 the departure of her predecessor, and later in December 2017 was
66 unanimously voted by the law faculty to take the title of Dean and
67 Henry Vaughan Watkins and Selby Watkins McRae Professor of Law,



68 approved by the Board of Trustees of Mississippi College for this
69 leadership role; and

70 WHEREAS, Dean Bennett served as President of the Charles
71 Clark Chapter of the American Inns of Court, actively participated
72 in the activities of the Inn as a Bencher, and encouraged student
73 participation in the Inn, exposing law students to expert
74 practitioners and judges; and

75 WHEREAS, Dean Bennett has been the recipient of numerous
76 professional awards to include the 2002 Susie Blue Buchanan Award,
77 the 2018 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Mississippi Women
78 Lawyers Association, the Professionalism Award from the Capital
79 Area Bar Association, the Professionalism Award from the
80 Mississippi Bar Foundation, Mississippi College School of Law
81 Faculty Collegiality Award, Mississippi College School of Law
82 Alumni Association Lawyer of the Year Award, Hinds County Bar
83 Association Outstanding Service Award and the Professionalism in
84 the Field of Law Award; and

85 WHEREAS, Dean Bennett served the legal community through her
86 position as a member of the Board of Commissioners of The
87 Mississippi Bar, Trustee of the Mississippi Bar Foundation, Bar
88 President's Forum Committee, Mississippi Supreme Court Rules
89 Advisory Committee, U.S. District Court Advisory Group for the
90 Civil Justice Reform Act, the Supreme Court Task Force on Gender
91 Fairness, numerous Mississippi Bar committees, President of the
92 Hinds County Bar Association, President and Governor Emeritus of



93 the Fifth Circuit Bar Association and the Metro-Jackson Black
94 Women Bar Association; and

95 WHEREAS, Dean Bennett was elected by the attorneys of
96 Mississippi to serve as President of The Mississippi Bar for the
97 term from July 2017 to July 2018, after taking the oath of office
98 from Chief Justice William Waller, Jr., of the Mississippi Supreme
99 Court, where she represented The Mississippi Bar throughout the
100 State of Mississippi and in regional and national gatherings of
101 Bar Presidents; and

102 WHEREAS, Dean Bennett championed efforts to promote diversity
103 and inclusion not only at Mississippi College School of Law but
104 also in legal education writ large and in society; and

105 WHEREAS, Dean Bennett led the Mississippi College School of
106 Law through a successful accreditation review by the Council on
107 Legal Education and Admission to the Bar of the American Bar
108 Association after having improved the credentials of entering law
109 students and increased the bar examination passage rate; and

110 WHEREAS, Dean Bennett was a member of and active in a series
111 of professional associations designed to promote the rule of law
112 and the fair administration of justice to include being a Fellow
113 of the American Bar Association and the Mississippi Bar
114 Foundation, as well as maintaining membership in the American Bar
115 Association, the Mississippi Bar Association, the Magnolia Bar
116 Association, the Fifth Circuit Bar Association, and the
117 Mississippi Women Lawyers Association; and



118 WHEREAS, Dean Bennett led the Mississippi College School of
119 Law through the COVID-19 challenges, ensuring that faculty, staff,
120 and students remained healthy while functioning in an in-person
121 learning environment; and

122 WHEREAS, Dean Patricia Bennett's husband Claude, a building
123 contractor, has given generously of his time and energy to assist
124 Dean Bennett with her decanal duties and in particular with her
125 leadership role while President of The Mississippi Bar; and

126 WHEREAS, as Patricia Bennett prepares to retire from her
127 position as Dean of the Mississippi College School of Law, it is
128 most appropriate that this Legislature respectfully acknowledges
129 her immeasurable contributions to the Mississippi College School
130 of Law and the entire legal profession which, by positively
131 influencing the education and training of tomorrow's bench and bar
132 while working to create increased access to necessary legal
133 services for all, have greatly benefited not only the individual
134 lives of many, but the entire State of Mississippi:

135 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
136 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That
137 we do hereby commend Mississippi College School of Law Dean
138 Patricia Bennett on the occasion of her retirement, and extend to
139 her our heartiest wishes for a long and healthy retirement marked
140 by continued success of all of her future personal and
141 professional endeavors.



142 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
143 Dean Patricia Bennett, the Mississippi College School of Law, the
144 Board of Trustees of Mississippi College, and made available to
145 the Capitol Press Corps.

