

By: Senator(s) Hickman, Barnett, Butler  
(38th), Jackson (11th), Simmons (13th),  
Thomas

To: Rules

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 13

1 A RESOLUTION PAYING TRIBUTE TO THE LEGACY OF CIVIL RIGHTS  
2 LEADER REVEREND DR. CHARLES JOHNSON, SR., OF MERIDIAN,  
3 MISSISSIPPI, MOURNING HIS PASSING AND EXTENDING THE CONDOLENCES OF  
4 THE SENATE TO HIS SURVIVING FAMILY.

5 WHEREAS, we join the citizens of Meridian, Mississippi, in  
6 mourning the passing of Community Leader and Civil Rights Icon,  
7 Dr. Charles Johnson, Sr., of Meridian, Mississippi, who passed  
8 away on January 19, 2022, at the age of 83. He established and  
9 pastored Fitkins Memorial Church of the Nazarene since 1961; and

10 WHEREAS, Dr. Johnson came to Meridian and began his church  
11 and mission during a turbulent time of race relations. He was a  
12 big part of the Civil Rights Movement and continued as a strong  
13 community leader as his health allowed. Dr. Johnson was a voice  
14 for change and a voice for peace throughout his ministry; and

15 WHEREAS, in an interview five years ago, Dr. Johnson recalled  
16 racial tensions were tough in his early days. He noted how Civil  
17 Rights Workers' Michael Schwerner and Meridian's James Chaney both  
18 helped him at his church; and



19           WHEREAS, Author Chet Bush wrote about Johnson in his book,  
20 *Called to The Fire*. He described Johnson as a key witness to take  
21 the stand in the trial famously called the "Mississippi Burning"  
22 case and played an important role for the United States Department  
23 of Justice, offering clarity to the event that led to the Voting  
24 Rights Act of 1965; and

25           WHEREAS, Reverend Johnson was born on March 5, 1938, in  
26 Orlando, Florida, to Robert Lee Lewis and Martha Johnson. He  
27 accepted Christ through the teachings of the late C.R. Smith.  
28 Reverend Johnson attended the Institute Church of the Nazarene in  
29 West Virginia. He later received an Honorary Doctor of Divinity  
30 Degree from Trevecca Nazarene University in Nashville, Tennessee;  
31 and

32           WHEREAS, Reverend Johnson came to Meridian, Mississippi, in  
33 1961 to begin his pastoral journey as Lead Pastor of Fitkins  
34 Memorial Church of the Nazarene. He served in this capacity for  
35 over 60 years. As a leader in the Nazarene Church, he was the  
36 first African American to be appointed to the position of Chairman  
37 of Sunday School Ministries. Reverend Johnson was one of the  
38 pioneers of the Civil Rights Movement in Meridian and served his  
39 community until his death; and

40           WHEREAS, Reverend Johnson was preceded in death by a  
41 daughter, Deborah Glenn; mother, Martha Johnson; father, Robert  
42 Lewis; three brothers: Otha Kelly, Billy Johnson and Paul  
43 Johnson; and two grandchildren: Shandy Hudson and Justin Charles



44 Johnson. He leaves to cherish his memory, his wife, Shirley; son,  
45 Charles, Jr. (Sabrina); daughters: Sheryl Dixon (Reynaldo),  
46 Christina Robinson, Janyce Spruill (Nigiel), Angela Bell, Nikki  
47 Bell and Amelia Portis (Michael); sister, Ora Lee Carter; 17  
48 grandchildren; and a host of friends and his entire church family;  
49 and

50 WHEREAS, we pay tribute and hold dear the remembrance of this  
51 most public-spirited citizen of Mississippi whose civic energy was  
52 an example to all and who leaves a legacy of leadership and  
53 dedication to all in our state:

54 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF  
55 MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby pay tribute to the legacy of Civil  
56 Rights Leader Reverend Dr. Charles Johnson, Sr., of Meridian,  
57 Mississippi, mourn his passing and extend the condolences of the  
58 Senate to his surviving family.

59 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to  
60 the surviving family of Dr. Charles Johnson, Sr., forwarded to  
61 Fitkins Memorial Church of the Nazarene, and be made available to  
62 the Capitol Press Corps.

