

By: Representative Scott

To: Rules

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 56

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE ESTEEMED AND LAUDABLE
2 LEGISLATIVE CAREER AND PUBLIC SERVICE OF THE MOST HONORABLE AND
3 DISTINGUISHED GENTLEMAN FROM MADISON, REPRESENTATIVE EDWARD
4 BLACKMON, JR., UPON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT FROM THE
5 MISSISSIPPI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

6 WHEREAS, the honorable and distinguished Gentleman from
7 Madison, Representative Edward Blackmon, Jr., has tirelessly
8 worked on behalf of the citizens of Mississippi and House District
9 57, situated in Madison County, for 41 years from the historical
10 floor of the majestically aesthetic, ornate and hallowed House
11 Chamber; and

12 WHEREAS, before assuming his seat as the member of the
13 Mississippi House of Representatives from District 57,
14 Representative Blackmon was compelled, at the age of 15, to civic
15 and social activism as an advocate for every facet of quality,
16 after hearing the conversations shared between his father, Edward
17 Blackmon, Sr., and others about the NAACP and the extent of the
18 organization's work during the Civil Rights Movement and efforts
19 to mobilize the Black vote; and



20 WHEREAS, it was during this period, while sitting in the back
21 of his home church, Canton's Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church,
22 that the freedom songs ringing throughout the sanctuary convicted
23 his heart and, in that moment, a young and inspired Edward Jr.
24 made the decision to become a part of the movement to effectuate
25 the change he had so often heard his father discuss, and soon
26 thereafter began attending protests that sought to dismantle the
27 suppression of African-American voter registration efforts; and

28 WHEREAS, while participating in one such protest rally, a
29 16-year-old Edward experienced firsthand the cruel bitterness of
30 prejudicial treatment and tainted abuse of authority by law
31 enforcement officers when he and other protesters were tear
32 gassed, arrested and hauled off in the back of a feces-laden
33 chicken truck to be jailed in Jackson, Mississippi; and

34 WHEREAS, inspired by Attorney Carsie Hall, who intervened on
35 the protesters' behalf to secure their release from jail, and
36 whose polished appearance and command of respect from Caucasians
37 in positions of authority left him in awe, a rejuvenated Blackmon
38 was determined to follow the same professional path as Hall, even
39 though he was unaware of the nature of Hall's profession at the
40 time of his release; and

41 WHEREAS, after graduating from Rogers High School in Canton,
42 Edward pursued his collegiate studies at the historic Tougaloo
43 College, completing his baccalaureate matriculation in three
44 years, and was also where he took the Law School Admissions Test



45 (LSAT) as a freshman, scoring high enough to gain admission to Ole
46 Miss, Notre Dame, Michigan and George Washington University (GWU),
47 ultimately choosing the latter, where he and his lifelong friend,
48 fellow Tougaloo alum, and eventual fellow legislative colleague,
49 Willie Bailey, who helped him navigate the waters of GWU; and

50 WHEREAS, upon the completion of the requisite study for the
51 conference of his law degree from George Washington University,
52 the younger Blackmon's first order of correcting the societal ills
53 of the State of Mississippi's foreboding past was to reestablish
54 his father's presence in his hometown, after the senior Blackmon
55 was prompted, out of the necessity of fear for his life and the
56 lives of his family, to leave Canton for New York as a result of
57 being blackballed from employment due to his zealous involvement
58 in the Civil Rights Movement; and

59 WHEREAS, upon his return to Mississippi, and before assuming
60 his seat as the member of the Mississippi House of Representatives
61 from District 57, Representative Blackmon's legal career was
62 birthed at North Mississippi Legal Services in Greenwood, however,
63 the sacred soil of his hometown of Canton, where the flame of
64 advocacy for the "least of these" was ignited, beckoned his return
65 to champion the effectuation of positive changes with an unceasing
66 tenacity; and

67 WHEREAS, using his own financial resources and enduring
68 countless threats to his life, an undeterred Blackmon mounted
69 legal challenges against the monotonous status quo employment



70 practices of the local powers-that-be to ensure that public
71 service sector jobs were reflective of the entire community, which
72 ultimately resulted in the employment of African Americans in the
73 city's police and fire departments and local banks; and

74 WHEREAS, after successfully articulating compelling arguments
75 before the judiciary that usher in an era of integration within
76 the public service sector, Blackmon, who demonstrated himself to
77 be a discerning and methodical legal tactician, then pursued cases
78 against Madison County and the City of Canton, tackling the
79 glaring disparities in quality of life services and amenities the
80 governing authorities perpetuated between the classes, from water
81 infrastructure needs, to sidewalks, and even the manner by which
82 county and municipal officials were elected, before turning his
83 sights to the pervasive issues of inadequacy that plagued
84 communities of color throughout the state, particularly in the
85 area of elected representation; and

86 WHEREAS, upon his election in 1979, Attorney Edward Blackmon,
87 Jr., became the Representative Blackmon upon his election to the
88 Mississippi House of Representatives, but his election was short
89 lived after only one year of service after his district was
90 collapsed during the 1980 legislative redistricting process; and

91 WHEREAS, determined to serve as a voice for the people whom
92 he witnessed endure the hardships of a corrupt system of
93 steel-fisted governing by statewide and locally elected officials,
94 Blackmon's indomitable mettle guided his decision to seek



95 legislative office once again, and after mounting a successful
96 election bid in 1983, he became the distinguished Gentleman from
97 Madison upon being sworn into office on the first day of his first
98 legislative session in January 1984; and

99 WHEREAS, Representative Blackmon wasted no time requesting
100 legislation, amendments and reports that would help effectuate
101 into law the ideologies and policy changes that his constituents
102 had elected him to further, exuding the same assertive confidence
103 he had grown, out of experience, to wear at all times in his
104 personal and professional capacities, and never backing down from
105 a challenge in debate or political or procedural posturing; and

106 WHEREAS, in a true display of intestinal fortitude,
107 Representative Blackmon, who never lost sight of his commitment to
108 be a true ambassador for the people, was appointed to the
109 Apportionment and Elections in 1989, ahead of the 1990 decennial
110 census and the same legislative reapportionment process that cost
111 him his legislative seat in 1980, and began brokering deals with
112 White Democrats in an effort to get more districts for prospective
113 Black legislators; and

114 WHEREAS, after conversations with the first faction regarding
115 his dogged commitment to increasing African-American
116 representation in the Legislature rapidly deteriorated,
117 Representative Blackmon aligned his political agenda with that of
118 a newly emerged second faction of more amiable and receptive
119 Democrats who supported his commitment to successfully achieve



120 what they each desired, which resulted in the Mississippi
121 Legislature's minority composition increasing from five to 45
122 African-American legislators in a single term; and

123 WHEREAS, thereafter, Representative Blackmon, whose record of
124 successful victories when endeavoring to ensure equitable
125 representation of Mississippi's African-American population at
126 every level of governance, was determined to make certain that the
127 state's judiciary was also reflective of the demographic, and upon
128 the completion of his redistricting mission, the judiciary
129 increased from five to 17 judges seated on the bench; and

130 WHEREAS, Representative Blackmon's love and deeply felt
131 respect for the Legislature as a hallowed institution has led his
132 fight to preserve and nurture its integrity for all legislators
133 who equally hold a lion's share in the stake of advancing the
134 direction of the state's economic, educational and political
135 climate; and

136 WHEREAS, during his 41 year tenure as a legislator,
137 Representative Blackmon served on the following committees:
138 Judiciary A for 24 years, and of which he formerly served as
139 Chairman for 8 years; Judiciary B for 20 years, and of which he
140 formerly served as Chairman for 12 years; former Vice Chairman of
141 Judiciary En Banc; Municipalities for 16 years, and of which he
142 formerly served as Chairman for four years; Agriculture;
143 Apportionment and Elections for 28 years; Congressional
144 Redistricting for 20 years; Constitution County Affairs for 16



145 years; Education; Executive Contingent Fund; Game and Fish (now
146 Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks); Juvenile Justice (now Youth and
147 Family Affairs); Labor (now Workforce Development); Legislative
148 Reapportionment (formerly Reapportionment and Redistricting) for
149 28 years; Penitentiary (now Corrections); Rules for 36 years; and
150 Ways and Means for 32 years; and

151 WHEREAS, an honored and cherished member of the Mississippi
152 House of Representatives, revered for his legal expertise and
153 credible passion for public service, Representative Blackmon,
154 whose mere presence before the well of the House commands the
155 immediate respect and undivided attention of his legislative
156 peers, is not one to limit his community involvement to the
157 Legislature, Representative Blackmon has always been active in his
158 district and dedicated to improving the quality of life for all
159 citizens, as evidenced by his service as: former Chairman of the
160 Legislative Black Caucus; former President of the Magnolia Bar
161 Association; emeritus trustee of Tougaloo College Board of
162 Trustees; member of the NAACP; member of the Mississippi Bar
163 Association; member of the American Bar Association; member of the
164 Mississippi Trial Lawyers Association; and member of the Cade
165 Chapel Missionary Baptist Church; and

166 WHEREAS, equipped with an adept understanding of the letter
167 and analysis of the law, Representative Blackmon's reputation as
168 an astute barrister precedes him, and his portfolio of success
169 before the bench encompasses a perfect track record of more than



170 50 defense trial victories during a 20-year period in which he
171 never lost a case; and

172 WHEREAS, over the course of his extensive career appearing
173 before the tribunal, familiarizing himself with a keen awareness
174 of court etiquette that has guided his path as a litigious arbiter
175 of the law, the rapport he has established with his clients,
176 fellow attorneys and judges has enabled him to provide effective
177 counsel to yield fruitful adjudication in the verdicts in favor of
178 those he has been chosen to represent from the indigents to
179 Fortune 100 and Fortune 500 corporate clients, which in turn have
180 placed him amongst the nation's most notable litigators, as
181 evidenced by numerous prestigious honors of which he has been a
182 recipient, including: *Lawyers Weekly USA* 1999 Top Ten verdicts;
183 *National Law Journal* 2002 11th winningest verdict; *National Law*
184 *Journal* 2013 top 100 verdicts; named as one of the Nation's Top
185 Ten Litigators by the *National Law Journal* 2002; named by *Memphis*
186 *Magazine* as Top Attorney in the Mid-South for 2014; National
187 Academy of Personal Injury Attorneys 2014 Top 10 Attorney Award;
188 George Washington University Black Law Alumni Association
189 Distinguished Alumnus Award; NAACP State Conference Medgar Evers
190 Medallion Award; Magnolia Bar Association R. Jess Brown Award; and
191 Tougaloo College Hall of Fame; and

192 WHEREAS, a rare leader who was able to lead effectively and
193 serve with humility while demonstrating fair and even-handed
194 stewardship of the office to which he was elected, Representative



195 Blackmon remains equally committed to philanthropic service in the
196 area of education, and has made substantial financial
197 contributions to his alma mater, Tougaloo College, as well as to
198 numerous other institutions and individual students seeking to
199 advance themselves through higher education; and

200 WHEREAS, the members of the House of Representatives will
201 cherish the bond and common goals for the betterment of this great
202 state shared with the Honorable Representative Edward Blackmon,
203 Jr., and that his impeccable service was unparalleled to the
204 Mississippi Legislature and to the constituents of District 57;
205 and

206 WHEREAS, Representative Blackmon has led and continues to
207 lead a life of bravery in the face of challenge, courage in the
208 face of adversity, sincerity in the face of apathy, honesty in the
209 presence of deceit, poise under pressure and grace under fire, and
210 through it all, this remarkable person has remained a phenomenal
211 gentleman, grounded in his integrity to be a standard bearer for
212 those who seek to improve the lives of others through positive
213 example, hard work and the undeniable truths of the Word of God;
214 and

215 WHEREAS, the service of Representative Blackmon would be
216 without honor but for the continued support, encouragement and
217 love of his family, who have endured the daunting struggles that
218 accompany the life of an elected official, and much credit is also
219 due to his loved ones who have sacrificed countless hours without



220 him in order to allow him to fulfill his legislative obligations,
221 including: his wife, Honorable Senator Barbara Martin Blackmon;
222 children, Madison Edward Blackmon, Bradford Jerome, Janessa
223 Blackmon and Lawrence Stephan Blackmon; and grandchildren, Enyla
224 Chenise Blackmon and Summer Rae Blackmon; and

225 WHEREAS, it is the policy of this Legislature to honor the
226 indelible legacy of remarkable service of our colleague and
227 friend, Representative Edward Blackmon, Jr., who represented his
228 district, this body and the people of this state with honor and
229 intrepid dignity:

230 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
231 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE SENATE CONCURRING
232 THEREIN, That we do hereby commend the esteemed and laudable
233 legislative career and public service of the most honorable,
234 distinguished and senior Gentleman from Madison, Representative
235 Edward Blackmon, Jr., and express fondest respect and best wishes
236 for continued success in all his future endeavors.

237 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
238 furnished to Representative Edward Blackmon, Jr., and to the
239 members of the Capitol Press Corps.

