

By: Representative Roberson

To: Rules

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 59

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

6 WHEREAS, the honorable and distinguished Gentleman from
7 Tallahatchie, Representative Thomas Upton (Tommy) Reynolds, II,
8 after 44 years of legislative service in the hallowed halls of the
9 Mississippi State Capitol, has announced his plans to retire from
10 the Mississippi House of Representatives at the conclusion of his
11 current term, after working tirelessly throughout all of those
12 years on behalf of the citizens of Mississippi and his House
13 district, which over the years has been District 32 or District 33
14 and has included portions of Tallahatchie, Yalobusha, Grenada and
15 Lafayette Counties; and

16 WHEREAS, before taking his seat as a member of the House in
17 1980, Representative Reynolds, a Charleston native now living in
18 Water Valley and a 1971 graduate of East Tallahatchie Attendance
19 Center, completed all of his college coursework in three years and



20 received a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from the
21 University of Mississippi in 1974, where he began his many decades
22 of holding elective office by serving as a member of the
23 Associated Student Body Senate for five years, and graduated from
24 the University of Mississippi School of Law with a Juris Doctor
25 degree in 1977, and soon afterward he began his long career in
26 public service as a municipal judge for the City of Charleston,
27 where he presided in 1977 and 1978; and

28 WHEREAS, after his election to the House of Representatives
29 in 1979, where he succeeded fellow long-time member George Payne
30 Cossar, Sr., Representative Reynolds became the distinguished
31 "Gentleman from Tallahatchie" when he was sworn into office on the
32 first day of his first legislative session in January 1980, and
33 right away he began requesting the drafting of legislation,
34 amendments and reports to try to enact into law the policies that
35 his constituents elected him to pursue and promote; and

36 WHEREAS, Representative Reynolds served during the terms of
37 19 of the highest-ranking officers in the executive and
38 legislative branches during his nearly five decades in the House,
39 including eight governors, beginning with William Winter, seven
40 lieutenant governors, beginning with Brad Dye, and four House
41 speakers, beginning with Buddie Newman; and

42 WHEREAS, during his long tenure as a member of the House,
43 Representative Reynolds has held a number of positions of
44 leadership, including serving as Chairman of the Oil, Gas and



45 Other Minerals Committee from 1988 until 1992, Vice Chairman of
46 the Judiciary B Committee from 1992 until 1996, Chairman of the
47 Local and Private Committee from 1996 until 2000, Chairman of the
48 Apportionment and Elections Committee from 2000 until 2012,
49 Chairman of the Joint Legislative Reapportionment Committee and
50 the Joint Congressional Redistricting Committee from 2008 until
51 2012, Vice Chairman of the Judiciary A Committee from 2012 until
52 2016, Vice Chairman of the Apportionment and Elections Committee
53 from 2016 until 2020, and Vice Chairman of the Judiciary A
54 Committee from 2020 until 2024; and he also served as a member of
55 the Agriculture, Appropriations, Conservation and Water Resources,
56 Constitution, County Affairs, Highways and Highway Financing,
57 Interstate Cooperation, Judiciary En Banc, Management, Military
58 Affairs, Penitentiary, Public Health and Human Services, Rules,
59 Transportation and Ways and Means Committees, and the Joint Code
60 Committee; and

61 WHEREAS, in recognition of his leadership ability and the
62 many contributions that he had already made to the House by that
63 time, Representative Reynolds was elected as Temporary Speaker by
64 acclamation on the first day of the 2004 session, and in that role
65 he presided over the election of the permanent Speaker and
66 administered the oath of office to newly elected Speaker Billy
67 McCoy; and

68 WHEREAS, among the multitude of memorable and significant
69 legislation that was passed during Representative Reynolds'



70 service in the House, those of which he is most proud and which he
71 personally supported or made important contributions to, include
72 the landmark Education Reform Act of 1982, enacted during his
73 first term in office, which resulted in mandated statewide
74 kindergartens; changing the House Rules in 1987, which helped to
75 make the House a more open and democratic body; providing for a
76 constitutional initiative process in 1992, which allowed the
77 citizens to propose and approve changes to the Mississippi
78 Constitution; creating the Court of Appeals of Mississippi in
79 1993, which helped relieve the burden on the Mississippi Supreme
80 Court in hearing and deciding appeals; creating the Motor Vehicle
81 Ad Valorem Tax Reduction Fund in 1994, which he personally
82 designed in a handwritten floor amendment that was narrowly
83 adopted and became the basis for the final bill that reduced the
84 high cost of car tags; and personally crafting the legislative
85 reapportionment plan in 2002, which set the lines for all of the
86 House and Senate districts that were used for the first three
87 legislative elections held in the new century and also solidified
88 his well-served reputation as the master of reapportionment and
89 redistricting; and

90 WHEREAS, Representative Reynolds was a member of the "House
91 26," a group of 26 young, rebellious members who in 1984 planted
92 the seeds for the winds of change in the House when they
93 unsuccessfully sought to change the House Rules to make the House
94 more open and give the average member more say in the process, and



95 their principled stance was considered at the time to be either
96 courageous or foolish depending on one's perspective; they failed
97 in their challenge that year and were relegated to relatively
98 meaningless committee assignments for their efforts, but the group
99 did not give up, and within a few years the original 26 rebels had
100 blossomed into a three-fifths majority of the House; and in a
101 dramatic vote during the first week of the 1987 session, they
102 ultimately prevailed, leading a successful revolt that changed the
103 House Rules and reduced the powers of the Speaker over the body;
104 and their untiring endeavors to accomplish their goal resulted in
105 the most substantial changes to the institutional structure of the
106 body in the modern history of the House; and

107 WHEREAS, Representative Reynolds is not one who has limited
108 his community involvement to the Legislature, as he has been
109 practicing as a small-town attorney ever since he graduated from
110 law school, during which he has helped many thousands of
111 individuals with their legal issues both large and small, and has
112 also served as the board attorney for the Board of Supervisors of
113 Tallahatchie County for 28 years and attorney for the City of
114 Charleston for five years; and he has constantly been active in
115 his district in numerous ways and dedicated to improving the
116 quality of life for all citizens, as evidenced by his affiliation
117 with and service as a member of the Rotary Club, the March of
118 Dimes, and the Mississippi Farm Bureau; and



119 WHEREAS, the son of a Baptist minister who grew up in the
120 church, Representative Reynolds often quotes from Scripture when
121 making speeches on the House floor, and he loves the King James
122 Version of the Bible and the wisdom contained therein, with his
123 favorite verse of Scripture being Galatians 6:9, which says "And
124 let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall
125 reap, if we faint not;"

126 WHEREAS, throughout all of his years of service in the House,
127 Representative Reynolds has received constant support,
128 encouragement and love from his family, who have endured the
129 daunting struggles that accompany the life of an elected official,
130 and much credit is due to his loved ones who have sacrificed
131 countless hours without him so that he could fulfill his
132 legislative obligations, including his wife Liz, their three
133 children, Rebecca, Upton and Daniel, and their three young
134 grandchildren, all of whom he holds dear as his greatest assets in
135 his life; and

136 WHEREAS, Representative Reynolds is known and admired for his
137 always positive outlook, his easy-going temperament, his
138 insightful intellect and his passion for important issues, and he
139 has always been and remains an exceptional gentleman, grounded in
140 integrity, highly regarded for his understanding of the ultimate
141 purpose of legislation, which is to help people, and he
142 continually seeks to improve the lives of others through his hard



143 work, positive example and the undeniable truths of the Word of
144 God; and

145 WHEREAS, leaving the Capitol will not end Representative
146 Reynolds' passion for public service, and retiring from the
147 Legislature does not mean that he is retiring, period, as he plans
148 to maintain his law practice on the Court Square in Charleston,
149 and he considers it a blessing to be able to serve each client
150 that he represents; and he plans to be just as involved on the
151 local level and other levels as he has been in Jackson, and wants
152 to continue to make a difference wherever and in whatever capacity
153 that he has; and

154 WHEREAS, the members of the House will cherish the bond and
155 common goals for the betterment of this great state that they
156 shared with Representative Reynolds over the course of the past 44
157 years, and his impeccable service, devotion and commitment to the
158 Mississippi Legislature and to the constituents of his House
159 district are unparalleled and will be greatly missed; and

160 WHEREAS, it is the policy of this Legislature to commend the
161 stellar service of public servants such as our colleague and
162 friend, Tommy Reynolds, who has represented his district, the
163 House of Representatives and the people of this state with honor
164 and dignity and is leaving a legacy of remarkable legislative
165 service as he departs the Capitol:

166 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
167 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE SENATE CONCURRING



168 THEREIN, That we heartily commend the most honorable and
169 distinguished Gentleman from Tallahatchie, Representative Tommy
170 Reynolds, for his most esteemed and laudable legislative career
171 and public service, and express our fondest respect and best
172 wishes for continued success in all his future endeavors.

173 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
174 furnished to Representative Tommy Reynolds and to the members of
175 the Capitol Press Corps.

