

By: Representatives Roberson, Johnson

To: Rules

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 64

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE MOST HONORABLE AND
2 DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER PHILIP GUNN FOR HIS ESTEEMED AND LAUDABLE
3 LEGISLATIVE CAREER AND PUBLIC SERVICE UPON THE OCCASION OF HIS
4 RETIREMENT FROM THE MISSISSIPPI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

5 WHEREAS, the 61st Speaker of the Mississippi House of
6 Representatives, Speaker Philip Gunn, has made the difficult
7 decision to complete his state legislative service at the
8 conclusion of his current term from the Mississippi House of
9 Representatives after tirelessly and sincerely working to elevate
10 the quality of life for the citizens of District 56, which
11 encompasses portions of Hinds and Madison Counties, and which also
12 formerly encompassed areas of Warren and Yazoo Counties, as well
13 as for all citizens of the State of Mississippi for the past 20
14 years; and

15 WHEREAS, before taking his seat as a member of the House in
16 2004, Speaker Gunn, who was born in Hattiesburg and raised in
17 Clinton, received his most vital support from his late parents,
18 who encouraged him as he played sports growing up, which proved
19 beneficial to his development as an intrepid leader in sports,



20 business and politics, as made evident by an exceptional record of
21 athletic successes as a high school and collegiate sports
22 phenomenon, who was the only Clinton Arrows senior to play
23 football, basketball and baseball, leading his football team to
24 the state championship in 1980 and No. 1 ranking in the final
25 United Press International (UPI) Coaches Poll with being named
26 recipient of All-State quarterback honors by the Mississippi
27 Sportswriters and selections to play in the North/South All-Star
28 game before graduating to attend Mississippi College, where he
29 played for one semester, and ultimately transferring to his
30 beloved Baylor University, where he walked on as a scout team
31 player with the Bears' gridiron warriors; and

32 WHEREAS, Speaker Gunn graduated from Baylor in 1985 with a
33 bachelor of business administration degree, and then returned to
34 his home state for his legal education, graduating from the
35 University of Mississippi School of Law with a Juris Doctor degree
36 in 1989, where he received the Dean's Distinguished Service Award;
37 and

38 WHEREAS, without coincidence, competitors who excel in sports
39 are also poised to excel in other areas of life, and the skills
40 and lessons that Speaker Gunn acquired as an athlete followed him
41 throughout his career path, and manifested themselves in his
42 selection as Student Body President of the Ole Miss School of Law,
43 in his admission to the practice of law with Wells Marble and
44 Hurst, PLLC, and in his bid to seek elective office to the



45 Mississippi Legislature in 2003, where his service as an attentive
46 and vigilant student of the institution of the Mississippi
47 Legislature groomed him for his rise to the office of public trust
48 and role as a true guardian of the people; and

49 WHEREAS, Philip Gunn began serving the Mississippi House of
50 Representatives in 2004 with an even-keeled approach to
51 legislating that was premised in thoughtful analysis and civility,
52 and within the short span of eight years after his initial
53 election to the Legislature, he ascended to become the third
54 highest ranking elected official in the State of Mississippi upon
55 being elected by his peers as the 61st Speaker of the House on
56 January 3, 2012, signaling an official changing of the guard and
57 marking a historical moment in the shift of the political paradigm
58 when, for the first time in 136 years, a Republican legislator
59 held the title as Speaker of the Mississippi House of
60 Representatives; and

61 WHEREAS, with a courageous spirit, a calmly, deft hand and a
62 heart of compassion, Speaker Gunn, who is a firm believer in the
63 power of effective communication, has piloted the helm of the
64 House of Representatives with utmost deference to facilitate an
65 inclusive approach to hear and consider the concerns and
66 recommendations of each House member to better formulate a unified
67 approach to governing; and

68 WHEREAS, "It is a great honor to serve as your Speaker of the
69 House of Representatives," has been his quote as he has served as



70 Speaker for the last 12 years with humility and dignity, always
71 striving to do what he thought was best for all people of this
72 great state; and

73 WHEREAS, Speaker Gunn is widely admired for his talent in
74 building consensus in the Legislature, a trait emulated by other
75 members of the House in the face of challenging legislative
76 deliberations, and his congenial nature, ability to listen
77 effectively and infectious sense of humor have enabled him to
78 defuse contentious and controversial situations with his
79 infallible knack for impromptu improvisation; and

80 WHEREAS, Speaker Gunn credits his ability to reach across the
81 aisle to his time spent at Baylor, where he met students from
82 every state in the nation and from countries around the world,
83 exposing him to this diversity and setting the foundation for his
84 career, which has translated into clearly defined and consistently
85 applied positions to effectively wield the most influence to
86 accomplish the House's policy positions; and

87 WHEREAS, a servant-leader by innate design, Speaker Gunn, in
88 assuming the responsibilities of Speaker of the House, has
89 endeavored to cultivate a mentality of service and accountability
90 within the membership by advancing initiatives that compel the
91 membership to remain actively engaged with their constituency, and
92 holding fast to the words recorded in Ephesians 2:4-10, "But God,
93 who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,
94 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with



95 Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together,
96 and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That
97 in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his
98 grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by
99 grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it
100 is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For
101 we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,
102 which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"; and

103 WHEREAS, during his twelve-year tenure as Speaker of the
104 House, Philip Gunn has served as a guiding force methodically
105 navigating the passage of virtually every meaningful economic
106 development, educational, public health and transportation
107 program, criminal justice and social reform measure that has been
108 addressed by the Mississippi Legislature, helping to redefine the
109 history of Mississippi with the creation of numerous monumental
110 pieces of legislation, including: the creation of the
111 "Gestational Age Act," leading directly to the long-hoped-for
112 overturn of the Roe v. Wade decision, House Bill No. 1510 (2018);
113 changing the design of the State of Mississippi's flag, to the
114 current "In God We Trust" flag, House Bill No. 1796 (2020),
115 providing for the largest teacher pay raise to date, with the
116 "Strategically Accelerating the Recruitment and Retention of
117 Teachers (START) Act of 2022," House Bill No. 530 (2022);
118 endorsing the "Mississippi Religious Freedom Restoration Act,"
119 Senate Bill No. 2681 (2014); the "Protecting Freedom of Conscience



120 from Government Discrimination Act," House Bill No. 1523 (2016); a
121 comprehensive multi-year legislative agenda devoted to protecting
122 women and children from human trafficking during the 2019, 2020
123 and 2021 Legislative Sessions; the "Child Protection Act and Child
124 Rape Protection Act," House Bill No. 16 (2012); the "Regulate
125 Experimental Adolescent Procedures (REAP) Act," House Bill No.
126 1125 (2023); "Mississippi Broadband Accessibility Act," House Bill
127 No. 1029 (2022); historic investments in road and bridge
128 infrastructure through the "Mississippi Infrastructure
129 Modernization Act of 2018," House Bill No. 1 (2018 1st
130 Extraordinary Session); countless bills to protect 2nd Amendment
131 gun rights; "Mississippi Church Protection Act," House Bill No.
132 786 (2016); championing the largest tax cut in Mississippi's
133 history, amounting to more than \$525 Million in tax relief with
134 the "Mississippi Tax Freedom Act of 2022," House Bill No. 531
135 (2022); and doubling penalties for crimes against law enforcement,
136 firefighters and first responders, with the passage of "Back the
137 Badge Act of 2017," House Bill No. 645 (2017) among countless
138 other legislative accomplishments, which are too numerous to list;
139 and

140 WHEREAS, during his twenty-year tenure as a member of the
141 House, Speaker Gunn has held a number of positions as a member of
142 the House Committees on: Conservation and Water Resources;
143 Interstate Cooperation; Judiciary A; Judiciary B; Juvenile
144 Justice; Management; Public Utilities; Rules; and Wildlife,



145 Fisheries and Parks; and the Joint Legislative Committee on
146 Compilation, Revision and Publication, of which he served as
147 Chairman; and the Joint Legislative Budget Committee, of which he
148 served as both Chairman and Vice Chairman; and

149 WHEREAS, in addition to his essential guidance of the House
150 of Representatives, Speaker Gunn has also served on the Executive
151 Committee of the Mississippi Republican Party and as Chairman of
152 the Republican House Conference since its formation in 2006,
153 wherein he was instrumental in organizing the Republicans in the
154 House of Representatives for the first time in modern history; and

155 WHEREAS, while Speaker Gunn is known and admired for his
156 always positive outlook, his insightful intellect and his passion
157 for important issues, he has always been and remains an
158 exceptional gentleman, grounded in integrity, highly regarded for
159 his understanding of the ultimate purpose of legislation, which is
160 to help people, and he continually seeks to improve the lives of
161 others through his hard work, positive example and the undeniable
162 truths of the Word of God, which have manifested in numerous
163 honors bestowed upon him, such as being named: Representative of
164 the Year for 2004, by Mississippi Homebuilders Association; "One
165 of Mississippi's Top 50 Leading Attorneys" in the *Mississippi*
166 *Business Journal's* Leadership in Law Class of 2010; Americans
167 United for Life recognition in 2010; recipient of the Kirk Fordice
168 Freedom Award in 2012, by the 19th Annual Central Mississippi
169 Friends of the National Rifle Association (NRA); recipient of the



170 2012 State Legislative Achievement Award from the U.S. Chamber
171 Institute for Legal Reform as a result of the Attorney General
172 "Sunshine" Act being passed during the 2012 Legislative Session;
173 and the following Meritorious Achievement Awards: Pro Texana
174 Medal of Service from Baylor University; 2013 Outstanding Citizen
175 Award by the Clinton Chamber of Commerce; election as 2014
176 Chairman of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Board of
177 Trustees; election as 2014 Vice Chairman of the Southern
178 Legislative Conference (SLC); election as 2020 American
179 Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) National Chair; 2014 recipient
180 of the Champion of Small Business Award presented by the National
181 Coalition for Capital; election as a member to the Board of
182 Directors for the State Legislative Leaders Foundation; and
183 recipient of the 2014 Libby Aydelott Award for Outstanding
184 Achievement in Public Policy, presented by the Mississippi
185 Heritage Trust for championship of the state historic tax credit;
186 and

187 WHEREAS, not one to limit his community involvement to the
188 Legislature, Speaker Gunn has always been active in his district
189 and dedicated to improving the quality of life for all citizens,
190 as evidenced by his service as a current member of the Clinton
191 Chamber of Commerce, previous service on the Clinton Public School
192 Board, former elder, deacon and Sunday School teacher at Morrison
193 Heights Baptist Church, and former chairman of the Southern



194 Baptist Theological Seminary Board of Trustees in Louisville,
195 Kentucky; and

196 WHEREAS, Speaker Gunn's life is a true testament to his faith
197 in God being a rewarder of those who diligently seek him, even in
198 the face of life's hardships after having lost both his parents
199 and sister during his second year of law school, but he has
200 remained resolute in his spiritual foundation and total reliance
201 upon the Holy Trinity to guide his path and direct his decisions,
202 as he holds fast to the infallible assurance of one of his
203 favorite passages of scripture, Ephesians 3:20-21, wherein is
204 recorded, "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all
205 we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within
206 us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout
207 all generations, forever and ever! Amen"; and

208 WHEREAS, leaving the Capitol will not end Speaker Gunn's
209 passion for public service, and completing his legislative service
210 to the Legislature does not mean that his public service is
211 finished, as he plans to maintain his active community involvement
212 on the local level just as he has at the State Capitol, and wants
213 to continue to make a difference wherever and in whatever capacity
214 the Lord wills, being mindful of his oft-quoted reference to
215 Galatians 6:9, "Let us not grow weary of doing good"; and

216 WHEREAS, his staff will record their service to him as a high
217 privilege and matchless honor unequalled in the annals of their
218 careers, cherishing endlessly his mentorship, friendship and



219 superlative example of Christian manhood and dignified leadership;
220 and

221 WHEREAS, the members of the House will cherish the bond and
222 common goals for the betterment of this great state shared with
223 Speaker Gunn over the past 20 years, and his impeccable service,
224 devotion and unparalleled commitment to the Mississippi
225 Legislature and to the constituents of District 56 will be greatly
226 missed; and

227 WHEREAS, the service of Speaker Gunn would be without honor
228 but for the continued support, encouragement and love of his
229 family and greatest reward, who have endured the daunting
230 struggles that accompany the life of an elected official, and much
231 credit is also due to his loved ones who have sacrificed countless
232 hours without him in order to allow him to fulfill his legislative
233 obligations, including: his beloved and devoted wife, Lisa
234 Watkins Gunn, whom he met while attending Baylor, and with whom he
235 has shared 30 years of unforgettable memories that have solidified
236 their bond in a special way, and bountifully enriched by the
237 blessing of four children, Meredith, Alex, Andrew and John David,
238 and grandchildren, Axel, Aiden and Marshall; and

239 WHEREAS, it is the policy of this Legislature to honor the
240 indelible legacy of remarkable service of our colleague and
241 friend, Philip Gunn, who represented his district, the House of
242 Representatives and the people of this state with honor and
243 intrepid dignity:



244 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
245 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE SENATE CONCURRING
246 THEREIN, That we do hereby commend the most honorable and
247 distinguished Speaker Philip Gunn for his esteemed and laudable
248 legislative career and public service, for all he has meant to the
249 Mississippi House of Representatives and for his unmatched
250 contributions to the people of the State of Mississippi, and
251 express fondest respect and best wishes for continued success in
252 all his future endeavors, and do hereby declare and resolve that
253 in the Mississippi House of Representatives, as in the hearts of
254 the people whom he has served, the memory of Speaker Philip Gunn's
255 service shall endure forever.

256 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
257 furnished to Speaker Philip Gunn and to the members of the Capitol
258 Press Corps.

