

By: Representative Paden

To: Rules

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 142

1 A RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING AND COMMENDING MRS. JOSEPHINE PRADIA
2 RHYMES FOR HER OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE AND CONTRIBUTIONS.

3 WHEREAS, Mrs. Josephine Pradia Rhymes, a Lake Charles,
4 Louisiana native, is the immediate former Executive Director of
5 Tri-County Workforce Alliance, and served since its implementation
6 in 1997, until her retirement in 2022; and

7 WHEREAS, Tri-County's mission is to promote long-term
8 economic and community development, by building a healthy and
9 competitive workforce through education and job training to a
10 three-county region (Bolivar, Coahoma, and Quitman counties) of
11 the Mississippi Delta, and a year ago, Tallahatchie and Sunflower
12 counties were added to the service area; and

13 WHEREAS, Mrs. Rhymes is an advocate for children and
14 education, and was a member of the Board of Directors of Youth
15 Leadership Clarksdale, a program she helped to conceive over 30
16 years ago, and led the charge that successfully passed the bond
17 issue to build the new Clarksdale High School; and



18 WHEREAS, in an educational career that spanned 32 years, Mrs.
19 Rhymes taught French, English, German, and journalism at W.A.
20 Higgins High School and Clarksdale High School, and French,
21 English, oral communication, and journalism at Coahoma Community
22 College; and

23 WHEREAS, for her outstanding service and advocacy, Mrs.
24 Rhymes has won numerous awards such as: she was selected "Star
25 Teacher" four times at Clarksdale High, and was selected for Who's
26 Who Among American Teachers in 1990, and she also received the
27 NAACP's Education Heritage Award in 1992; and

28 WHEREAS, additionally, Mrs. Rhymes was named "Woman of the
29 Year" by Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. in 1990; "Citizen of the
30 Year" for Clarksdale/Coahoma County in 1999; and "Board Member of
31 the Year" by the Aaron E. Henry Community Health Center in 2002;
32 and she received the Top Parole Board Member Award (Fund Raising
33 Award) for the local drive of the American Heart Association in
34 2004; the Delta Leadership Award from Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity,
35 Inc. in 2005; and the Merit Award for Community Service by Zeta
36 Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. in 2008; and

37 WHEREAS, Mrs. Rhymes received an award from Clarksdale High
38 School for the "Guiding Kids to Graduation Initiative" in 2014;
39 and the English Honor Society at Clarksdale High School was named
40 in her honor in 2014, renamed the "Josephine Pradia Rhymes English
41 Honor Society"; and



42 WHEREAS, Mrs. Rhymes received the GIVE Award from the State
43 of Mississippi from the Governor's Commission for Volunteer
44 Service in April 2015; the Outstanding Community Service Award
45 from Epsilon Xi Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.
46 and a Certificate of Excellence Award from the Clarksdale Mass
47 Choir for dedication and outstanding service to the community and
48 citizens of Clarksdale, both in January 2016; and also in 2016,
49 she was inducted into Coahoma Community College's Sports Hall of
50 Fame as a Community Leader Inductee; and

51 WHEREAS, in March 2017, Mrs. Rhymes was featured in a
52 documentary by Blue Magnolia Films and Barefoot Workshops by
53 Nickalus Jones, a senior at Clarksdale High School, for her work
54 to improve the lives of youth in Clarksdale, and depicting her
55 role in helping youth to be all that they can be, and as a part of
56 the project, two life-size pictures are on the doors of the old
57 Paramount Theater on Yazoo Avenue to help with revitalization of
58 downtown Clarksdale; and

59 WHEREAS, Mrs. Rhymes's extensive community involvement
60 includes the following: service on the District Workforce
61 Council; member of the Superintendent's Roundtable of the
62 Clarksdale Municipal School District; Mississippi State and
63 Regional Advisory Committee (Mississippi, Georgia and Alabama) for
64 the Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative; National Network of
65 Sector Partners Advisory Committee (Oakland, California); State of
66 Mississippi's Sector Strategy Team; Clarksdale/Coahoma County



67 Chamber of Commerce (Past President); Board of Directors for
68 Coahoma County Industrial Foundation; Board of Directors for Aaron
69 E. Henry Community Health Center (Secretary) and Northwest
70 Mississippi Medical Center; Board of Directors for the Jonestown
71 Family Center, (more than 15 years) and Carnegie Public Library,
72 (more than 20 years); Board of Directors for Community Foundation
73 of Northwest Mississippi (Past President); Executive Committee for
74 Foundation for the Mid-South's Sector Initiative; Board of
75 Directors for the Coahoma Community College Foundation; Board of
76 Directors for the Insight Center for Community Economic
77 Development, Oakland, California; Advisory Committee for the
78 McLean Institute at the University of Mississippi; and the
79 Advisory Council for Clarksdale/Coahoma County Higher Education
80 Center; and

81 WHEREAS, dedicated to academic excellence, Mrs. Rhymes
82 received her bachelor of arts degree from Southern University and
83 A&M College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and her master of education
84 degree from the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) in Oxford,
85 Mississippi, and she recently completed the requirements for the
86 CITI Program at the University of Mississippi in Oxford; and

87 WHEREAS, outside of her exceptional career and remarkable
88 service, Mrs. Rhymes was married to the late Mr. Robert A. Rhymes,
89 Sr., and is the mother of one daughter, Tarra Katrice
90 Rhymes-Slack, and one son, Robert A. Rhymes, Jr., and the



91 grandmother of one granddaughter, Pradia Nicole Slack, and one
92 grandson, Tyler Rhymes-Christian Slack; and

93 WHEREAS, Mrs. Rhymes is a founding member of The
94 Clarksdale-Marks Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority,
95 Inc., (serving as president for 13 years); co-founder of the
96 Coahoma Community College Booster Club, where she serves as
97 president; and co-founder of the Clarksdale Affiliate of Advocates
98 for Public Schools, where she serves as secretary; and

99 WHEREAS, devoted to her faith, Mrs. Rhymes is a member of
100 Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, where she serves as a
101 lector, financial secretary, and President of the Parish Council,
102 and she was recently honored by the Diocese of Jackson with the
103 Bishop Joseph Chanche Award for exemplary service to her parish
104 community; and

105 WHEREAS, additionally, during the summer of 2011, Mrs. Rhymes
106 wrote a grant and received money for summer employment for 15
107 youths and two adults, and beautified the entrances of Clarksdale
108 through the Mayor's office, and that same year, she also helped to
109 create a very short-lived youth council as an advisory group to
110 the mayor of Clarksdale, and in the winter of 2022, she
111 spearheaded a community-wide, month-long festival of lights
112 entitled, "I'll Be Home For Christmas", which brought lights,
113 food, crafts, music, prizes, and a festive spirit to Clarksdale;
114 and



115 WHEREAS, the Tri-County Workforce Alliance had two programs
116 that Mrs. Rhymes directed, Academy for Science, Reading, and
117 Mathematics for Potential Health Care Professionals (grades 6
118 through 8), and a High School Mentorship Program for Health Care
119 Professionals (grades 9 through 12) and up to community college,
120 and her work has gained Tri-County Workforce Alliance the title of
121 "Non-Profit of the Year 2017"; "A Community Star" by Community
122 Foundation of Northwest Mississippi; a Proclamation from the
123 Mississippi House of Representatives (House Resolution No. 6),
124 spearheaded by Representative Orlando Paden; and was honored by
125 The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson of Mississippi, with records of
126 the organization's accomplishments recorded in the Congressional
127 Record (March 26, 2014), and an individual recognition recorded in
128 the Congressional Record (August 16, 2022); and

129 WHEREAS, Mrs. Rhymes's work with this distinguished
130 organization and others was published in a book entitled *Engaging*
131 *the Community in Decision Making: Case Studies Tracking*
132 *Participation, Voice and Influence* by Roz Diane Lasker and John A.
133 Guidry, McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers (2007), and under
134 her leadership, the organization has brought over \$3.5 million
135 into the area to help promote community and economic development
136 by building a healthy competitive workforce through education and
137 job training, and the work has also been cited in the magazine
138 *Rural Society* (2014) entitled "Collective Action to Improve Rural



139 Community Wellbeing: Opportunities and Constraints in the
140 Mississippi Delta"; and

141 WHEREAS, in addition, Mrs. Rhymes has done numerous workshops
142 for children, young adults, and adults on etiquette, dress for
143 success, goal setting, effective communication, and work ethic,
144 and she has also served on numerous panels, most recently, when
145 she served as a panelist for the Delta Regional Forum on
146 Population, Development and Entrepreneurial Problem Solving, and
147 she also served as a mentor for Coahoma Agricultural High's
148 Mentorship Program, and for Higgins Magnet School for Performing
149 Arts Girls Rock Mentorship Program; and

150 WHEREAS, Mrs. Rhymes was featured on the front cover of *Delta*
151 *Business Journal* in June 2016, followed by a feature story in the
152 magazine about her work in the five counties that Tri-County
153 Workforce Alliance serves (Coahoma, Bolivar, Quitman, Sunflower
154 and Tallahatchie); and

155 WHEREAS, in January 2017, Mrs. Rhymes was asked to chair a
156 committee by the Clarksdale Municipal School District's
157 Superintendent's Round Table to pass a Special Bond Issue to build
158 a new stadium, track field, tennis courts for Clarksdale High
159 School, new classrooms, a library, a new gym floor and science lab
160 for W.A. Higgins, new lighting for George H. Oliver's auditorium,
161 new gym floor for Kirkpatrick, roofs for school buildings and
162 other safety features for the schools, and the bond was for \$8.5
163 million dollars, and it passed with 81% of the vote; and



164 WHEREAS, as a citizen who has made significant contributions
165 in the field of education, Mrs. Rhymes has a flag in her honor in
166 the Arts and Culture District in downtown Clarksdale, and in
167 February 2018, she received the Red Rose Award from The Delta
168 Kappa Gamma Society International Zeta State - Iota Chapter, for
169 promoting educational opportunities for children of Coahoma County
170 and surrounding areas, and having a great impact on high school
171 students and developing positive life skills in young adults; and

172 WHEREAS, Mrs. Rhymes is the co-author of two Abstracts
173 presented at the American Public Health Association's Annual
174 Meetings (APHA), entitled "Building New Pathways to a Healthier
175 Mississippi: A Youth Driven Rural Health Collective Impact
176 Initiative" (2016) and "Mississippi's Movement to Better Health:
177 Participatory Problem Solving to Address Long-term Health
178 Disparities" (2014), and on April 10, 2019, she received a
179 Certificate of Special Recognition for outstanding contributions
180 in community engagement as part of empowering individuals to
181 reduce lead exposure from drinking water through Community-Based
182 Research given at the University of Mississippi; and

183 WHEREAS, after 25 years of dedicated service, Mrs. Rhymes
184 officially retired from Tri-County Workforce Alliance on May 31,
185 2022, and in her retirement, she is working with Aaron E. Henry
186 Community Health Center to enhance the local Sasse Street Park
187 that will benefit the healthfulness of the citizens of Clarksdale



188 and Coahoma County, as well as boost community and economic
189 development; and

190 WHEREAS, it is the policy of the House of Representatives to
191 recognize and commend extraordinary community leaders, especially
192 those such as Mrs. Rhymes, whose noteworthy achievements and
193 phenomenal service to her community brings honor to the State of
194 Mississippi:

195 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
196 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby
197 recognize and commend Mrs. Josephine Pradia Rhymes for her
198 outstanding community service and contributions, and express our
199 most sincere wishes for continued success in all her future
200 endeavors.

201 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
202 furnished to Mrs. Josephine Pradia Rhymes and to the members of
203 the Capitol Press Corps.

