

By: Senator(s) Simmons (12th), Blount, Boyd, Branning, Frazier, McCaughn, Norwood, Sparks, Thompson, Suber To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 515

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION MOURNING THE PASSING AND RECOGNIZING
2 THE SIGNIFICANT JUDICIAL CAREER OF FORMER MISSISSIPPI SUPREME
3 COURT JUSTICE JAMES L. ROBERTSON.

4 WHEREAS, we join the Mississippi legal profession in
5 recognizing the record of service of former Mississippi Supreme
6 Court Justice James L. Robertson (83) who passed away on December
7 10, 2023; and

8 WHEREAS, Justice James L. Robertson was born in Greenwood,
9 Mississippi, on July 30, 1940. He grew up in his beloved hometown
10 of Greenville; and

11 WHEREAS, the Delta city is where the seeds of Justice
12 Robertson's professional journey were planted as a cub sports
13 reporter for the *Delta Democrat Times*, whose legendary editor
14 Hodding Carter, Jr., was an early mentor. After graduating from
15 Greenville High School, Robertson set off to Ole Miss and rose to
16 become Editor-In-Chief of the *Daily Mississippian*. In this
17 position, he challenged the school's approach to race-related



18 matters. Robertson would go on to be inducted into the Ole Miss
19 Hall of Fame; and

20 WHEREAS, Robertson's journalism career got sidetracked when
21 he was admitted to Harvard Law School. In 1965, he earned his
22 Juris Doctor degree from Harvard. Upon graduation, he returned to
23 Greenville, where he joined the firm of Keady, Campbell and
24 Delong, later Campbell and Delong. Robertson had an extensive
25 trial practice representing school boards, farmers, maritime
26 concerns, and various businesses and corporate clients, and he
27 represented individuals from all walks of life. He felt a duty to
28 seek justice for those who were underserved, a commitment he
29 attributed to the example set by his parents, Susie and L.D.
30 Robertson; and

31 WHEREAS, in 1983, Governor William Winter appointed Robertson
32 to fill a vacancy on the Mississippi Supreme Court, after which he
33 was elected for a full eight-year term. Often exhibiting a
34 literary flair, he authored nearly 800 opinions - majority,
35 concurring and dissenting; and

36 WHEREAS, from 1977 to 1992, Robertson was a member of the
37 faculty of the University of Mississippi School of Law. "Judge
38 Jimmy," as he was known, was devoted to his students. He wanted
39 them to know how much he valued them and hoped that his teaching
40 efforts were beneficial to their future careers. He wished to be
41 remembered for the wisdom he imparted on the last day of class.



42 This lecture eventually became a 1983 *Mississippi Law Review*
43 article, "The Lawyer as Hero"; and

44 WHEREAS, upon leaving the Supreme Court in 1992, Robertson
45 spent a semester in Manhattan as visiting professor at Fordham
46 University School of Law. In January 1993, he returned to private
47 practice as a shareholder with Wise, Carter, Child & Caraway in
48 Jackson, where he forged many professional friendships and enjoyed
49 mentoring young associates and law clerks as they began their
50 careers. At Wise Carter, he engaged in a general trial practice
51 for 25 years; and

52 WHEREAS, a prolific writer, Robertson published numerous
53 scholarly articles. An authority on the Mississippi Constitution,
54 he wrote an entire volume on that topic in the *Encyclopedia of*
55 *Mississippi Law*. He also authored two books of more general
56 appeal, *Heroes, Rascals, and the Law* (2019) and *Rowdy Boundaries*
57 (2023), published by the University Press of Mississippi. The
58 Capital Area Bar Association newsletter was a favorite outlet for
59 his musings, particularly his reviews of major league baseball
60 parks; and

61 WHEREAS, he considered his most significant professional
62 affiliation to be his life membership in the American Law
63 Institute, and he contributed to the revered Restatements of the
64 Law. He was a Fellow of the American Bar Association and of The
65 Mississippi Bar and a member of the American Inns of Court and
66 numerous other professional organizations. He was also a board



67 member of the Innocence Project New Orleans and the Mississippi
68 Innocence Project at Ole Miss Law School and actively supported
69 their work to seek justice for the victims of wrongful
70 convictions; and

71 WHEREAS, for all his academic and professional
72 accomplishments, Robertson showed the same zeal for his private
73 interests. An enthusiastic jogger, he ran countless races in
74 cities from New York to San Francisco. A lover of the opera, he
75 traversed the country following performances of his favorites,
76 especially Wagner, and he was President of the Mississippi Opera
77 Association in 1996-97. An ardent sports fanatic, Robertson
78 relished any opportunity to talk about seeing Ted Williams and
79 Bill Russell play in person, or how he was in the press box to
80 watch Johnny Vaught's greatest football teams and in the stands
81 for the Billy Cannon punt return; and

82 WHEREAS, he is survived by his wife, Linda Thompson
83 Robertson; three sons, Rob (Jenny), Lamar (Lauren) and Chris
84 Robertson; a brother, Dr. L.D. Robertson (Julie); two sisters, Dr.
85 Lucie Bridgforth and Bonnie Gardner (T.Y.); and five
86 grandchildren; and

87 WHEREAS, Justice Robertson leaves a great legacy of serving
88 the public, the legal profession and the administration of justice
89 over the span of his professional career. His love, commitment
90 and lasting impact on his family, Mississippi jurisprudence and
91 the State of Mississippi will be missed:



92 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
93 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That
94 we do hereby mourn the passing and recognize the significant
95 judicial career of former Mississippi Supreme Court Justice James
96 L. Robinson, and express the sympathy of the Legislature and our
97 thanks for sharing James L. Robertson with us and with the State
98 of Mississippi.

99 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
100 the family of Justice Robertson, forwarded to the Mississippi
101 Supreme Court and The Mississippi Bar, and be made available to
102 the Capitol Press Corps.

