

By: Senator(s) Tate, McCaughn, Hickman,  
Hopson, Frazier

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 547

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION EXTENDING THE HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES  
2 OF THE LEGISLATURE ON THE PASSING OF FORMER MERIDIAN MAYOR CHERYL  
3 "CHERI" MERRITT BARRY, THE CITY'S FIRST FEMALE MAYOR, AND  
4 COMMENDING HER CONTRIBUTIONS TO PUBLIC EDUCATION AND HER  
5 COMMUNITY.

6 WHEREAS, Mayor Barry served the City of Meridian as its first  
7 female mayor from 2009 to 2013. She was also a longtime educator  
8 in the Meridian Public School District and the former Executive  
9 Director of the American Red Cross Key Chapter prior to her term  
10 as mayor; and

11 WHEREAS, we join the citizens of Meridian, Mississippi, in  
12 mourning the passing of former Meridian Mayor Cheryl "Cheri"  
13 Merritt Barry (68) on Christmas Eve, December 24, 2024; and

14 WHEREAS, born April 19, 1955, to parents George and Jean  
15 Merritt, Cheri inherited all of the family drive and her business  
16 sensibility from her parents, owners of several businesses, most  
17 notably Bonnie Jeans and BJ's Alley, which Cheri later owned and  
18 managed; and



19           WHEREAS, Cheri immersed herself in the Meridian community at  
20 a young age. During her high school years, Cheri took to the  
21 softball diamond. She was a fierce competitor and an amazing  
22 pitcher. After graduating from Lamar High School, Cheri started  
23 her college career at Converse College in Spartanburg, South  
24 Carolina, which at the time was a women's college. Her dad  
25 thought that would be a good place for his vivacious daughter, and  
26 it was even though she had a habit of jumping on trains and  
27 sneaking in the cafeteria for ice cream. After a year, Cheri  
28 moved on to the University of Mississippi. There she joined Chi  
29 Omega and met her husband, Rick Barry. The two were married  
30 August 6, 1977; and

31           WHEREAS, Cheri served as the Executive Director of the Rush  
32 Foundation, which raises money to distribute to the families of  
33 hospital employees and vendors in times of need. Not only did she  
34 oversee the Foundation, but with her expertise in retail, she  
35 revamped the Rush Gift Shop; and

36           WHEREAS, most will remember Cheri as the first and, to date,  
37 the only female mayor of Meridian, an honor she worked hard for  
38 and an office she carried out with grace and strength. On the  
39 campaign trail, she went door-to-door often late into the night to  
40 listen to the needs of citizens. During her tenure, she was an  
41 ubiquitous presence in the Queen City. It made no difference how  
42 large or small an event was—if Mayor Barry was asked to attend,  
43 she was there; and



44 WHEREAS, from 2009-2013, the renovation of City Hall was  
45 completed, the 22nd Avenue overpass was improved, two city fire  
46 stations were built and the police department was relocated. As  
47 mayor, Cheri was proud of the city's relationship with the  
48 Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. They partnered with the City  
49 of Meridian often, and the current City Hall Lawn Christmas tree  
50 was the result of one of those collaborations; and

51 WHEREAS, Cheri was honored with many accolades during her  
52 life. Among those were Junior Auxiliary Humanitarian of the Year  
53 and The Meridian Star's Woman of the Year. Old and new friends  
54 walked with Cheri throughout her life. She was the one they  
55 depended on for comfort, care, advice, deliciously prepared foods  
56 and always a good laugh. Her joy for life was never more evident  
57 than when she had the lead role in Meridian Little Theatre's  
58 production of "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas." Theatre  
59 guests could have attended each performance of the play's run and  
60 never seen the same show. Cheri was a natural at improv and a  
61 bright star, both on and off the stage; and

62 WHEREAS, Cheri is preceded in death by father, George Durrant  
63 Merritt; maternal grandparents, Alvin and Bonnie Rosenbaum; and  
64 paternal grandparents, Charles and Florrie Press. She is survived  
65 by mother, Jean Carol Rosenbaum Merritt; husband of 46 years, John  
66 Richard "Rick" Barry; children, Jennifer Barry Fowler (David), Jay  
67 Richard Barry and John Merritt Barry; siblings, Greg Alvin Merritt  
68 (Dawn) and Jeana Merritt Bennett (Bo); grandchildren, George Bass



69 Fowler, Avery Fowler, John Hayes Fowler, Georgia Leigh Barry and  
70 John Carr Barry; and a host of extended family members and  
71 friends; and

72 WHEREAS, "Cheri had a huge joy for life. She left a mark on  
73 everyone she met. She was unforgettable," said her daughter  
74 Jennifer. "The gift we received from Mama was to truly learn  
75 about God." We pay tribute and cherish fondly the memory of this  
76 most public-spirited citizen whose enormous civic energy was a  
77 wonderful legacy to all in the State of Mississippi:

78 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF  
79 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That  
80 we do hereby extend the heartfelt condolences of the Legislature on  
81 the passing of former Meridian Mayor Cheryl "Cheri" Merritt Barry,  
82 the City's first female mayor, and commend her contributions to  
83 public education and her community.

84 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to  
85 the surviving family of Mayor Cheryl Barry, forwarded to the Mayor  
86 Jimmie Smith of Meridian and made available to the Capitol Press  
87 Corps.

