

By: Representative Scott

To: Rules

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 59

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION MOURNING THE LOSS, COMMEMORATING THE
2 LIFE, REVERED LEGACY, AND DISTINGUISHED PUBLIC SERVICE CAREER OF
3 TRAILBLAZER AND CHAMPION OF EQUALITY, FORMER SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE
4 OF THE MISSISSIPPI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, THE HONORABLE ROBERT
5 GEORGE CLARK, JR., AND EXPRESSING DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO HIS FAMILY
6 AND FRIENDS UPON HIS PASSING.

7 WHEREAS, it is written in II Timothy 4:7, "I have fought a
8 good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," and
9 as such, the immaculate author and finisher of our soul's destiny
10 summoned the mortal presence of a dearly beloved and highly
11 revered political pioneer, and former Mississippi House of
12 Representatives Speaker Pro Tempore, the Honorable Robert George
13 Clark, Jr., to eternal rest on March 4, 2025, rendering great
14 sorrow and loss to his family and many friends; and

15 WHEREAS, the State of Mississippi, particularly the community
16 of Holmes County, Mississippi, lost a revered community pillar,
17 extraordinary educator, mentor, astute civil rights activist and
18 well-versed politician with the passing of Speaker Pro Tempore
19 Clark, and there is now a hush in our hearts as we come together



to pay our respects to the memory of one who has been called to
join that innumerable heavenly caravan; and

WHEREAS, a native of Ebenezer, Mississippi, Robert George
Clark, Jr., was born on October 3, 1928, to the late Robert George
Clark, Sr., and Julia Ann Clark, and he became a pioneering
statesman whose unwavering dedication to public service reshaped
the legislative landscape of Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, after earning a bachelor of arts degree from Jackson
State University in 1952 and a master of science degree in
administration and educational services from Michigan State
University in 1959, and undertaking additional studies at
Mississippi Valley State University, Florida A&M University,
Western Michigan University and as a 1979 teaching fellow of the
John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University,
Speaker Pro Tempore Clark, began his journey of lifelong and
transformative contributions to the State of Mississippi by
dedicating 15 years to education as a teacher, coach and principal
in the Holmes County public school system and private
institutions, shaping the lives of countless young Mississippians,
setting aside his initial ambition to become an attorney; and

WHEREAS, recognizing that the parents of his students could
better contribute to the education of their children if they could
assist their children with their schoolwork, in 1966, Speaker Pro
Tempore Clark sought to create an adult education program in the
school district in which he was teaching; and



WHEREAS, his entry into the political arena began when the local school board denied his request to start the adult education program, and in disapproving his request, the board promised that if the local superintendent of education would approve of such a program, the board would endorse it, whereupon Speaker Pro Tempore Clark announced his candidacy for the office of superintendent; and

WHEREAS, however, before the next election for superintendent, the Mississippi Legislature enacted a law changing the superintendent's position from elected to appointed, a change that heightened Speaker Pro Tempore Clark's recognition of the dire need for representation and equity in government, and prompted his courageous decision to run for the Mississippi House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, Speaker Pro Temp Clark's 1967 election bid not only proved successful, but also transformative for Mississippi as well, as his election to the Mississippi House of Representatives, would indelibly etch his name in the annals of history as the first African American elected to the Legislature in the 20th century, breaking nearly a century of racial exclusion; and

WHEREAS, despite facing profound resistance and segregation in the early years of his tenure, Speaker Pro Temp Clark persevered, earning the respect of colleagues on both sides of the aisle through his intellect, resolve and dedication to justice as a fair and honest leader; and



70 WHEREAS, over his distinguished 36-year career in the
71 Mississippi House of Representatives, Speaker Pro Tempore Clark
72 ascended to key leadership roles, becoming the first
73 African-American committee chairman in 1977, when he was named
74 Chair of the House Education Committee, a position he held for a
75 decade, and played a pivotal role in shaping Mississippi's
76 education policy, including leading the passage of the landmark
77 1982 Education Reform Act, the 1984 Vocational Education Reform
78 Act and the Education Enhancement Act; and

79 WHEREAS, Speaker Pro Tempore Clark's legislative influence
80 expanded as he chaired the House Management Committee, House
81 Ethics Committee, and served as Vice Chairman of the Apportionment
82 and Elections Committee, all while holding a seat on the
83 influential House Rules Committee; and

84 WHEREAS, in recognition of his unparalleled leadership and
85 indomitable will to persevere, Clark's ascension amongst the
86 state's most influential political powers, culminated in the apex
87 acknowledgment of respect of his political career, when he was
88 elected by his legislative peers to the Office of Speaker Pro
89 Tempore of the Mississippi House of Representatives in 1992,
90 making history once again as the first African American to hold
91 this esteemed position, a role he was re-elected to in 1996 and
92 2000, solidifying his legacy as a trailblazer in Mississippi
93 politics; and



94 WHEREAS, Speaker Pro Tempore Clark was one of the founding
95 members of Central Mississippi, Inc., an antipoverty program in
96 Central Mississippi, which has been instrumental in preparing
97 rural children to enter the mainstream public schools; helped
98 organize the Milton Olive III Memorial Corporation of Holmes
99 County, an antipoverty program designed to provide essential
100 medical care to individuals; served as Director of Project Second
101 Start at Saints Junior College, an organization that focused on
102 giving adults an opportunity to develop vocational skills; and
103 organized the Fine Housing Enterprise Program which allowed
104 numerous poor families in the county to afford decent housing; and

105 WHEREAS, beyond his legislative service, Speaker Pro Tempore
106 Clark dedicated his post-legislative years to lecturing at
107 Mississippi Valley State University and continuing to inspire
108 future generations, as well as maintaining continued involvement
109 with Holmes County 21st Century Commission, an organization which
110 he organized for the purpose of preparing county residents for the
111 21st century through education, skill development and examples of
112 successful work ethic; and

113 WHEREAS, in recognition of his lifelong service and indelible
114 impact, the State of Mississippi proclaimed June 27, 2003, as
115 Robert George Clark, Jr. Day and honored his legacy by naming a
116 state government building in Jackson, Mississippi, in his name,
117 the first African American to receive such an honor, which
118 complimented the numerous awards and honors received during his



career, including the Alumnus of the Year Award from Jackson State University, the Award of Distinction and Outstanding Leadership Award from the University of Mississippi and the Outstanding Achievement Award for Education in Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, Speaker Pro Tempore Clark was a businessman, rancher, a faithful member of the Baptist Church and the Elks, and all during his life he has been a dedicated family man, raising his two sons, Robert George III and Bryant Wandrick, by his deceased wife, Essie, on his own before the divine aligning of the cosmos blessed his sanctimonious union with his lovely and gracious beloved wife, the former Jo Ann Ross, birthing a naturally harmonious blended family that added a daughter, LaLeche, each of whom remain as testaments to his legacy of strength, integrity and service; and

WHEREAS, the essence of Speaker Pro Tempore Clark's existence can be defined in a famous quote by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., which states, "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy," which summarizes the impervious ambition of an intrepid leader of his caliber; and

WHEREAS, though he has now traversed the threshold that separates the sanctum of mortal life on this blessed earth from the immortality afforded by life's eternal ever after, the unforgettable legacy of Speaker Pro Tempore Clark's service and commitment to mankind will continue to resonate in the lives of



those who were privileged to know him, serve alongside him, and benefit from his enduring contributions to the State of Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, we encourage the Clark family to find solace from these words recorded in II Corinthians 1:3-4, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God"; and

WHEREAS, it is with sincere humility that this Legislature recognizes and commends the monumental life, legacy and accomplishments of legendary trailblazers of our own time, such as that of Speaker Pro Tempore Clark, whose commitment to justice, equality and progress has left an indelible mark on this great state, and whose life, like a glowing ceremonial flame in the pomp and circumstance of a sacred consecration, leapt and danced in ritualistic form to the night wind's time and cadence, before yielding itself to the kindred spirits at the glimmer of a new dawn, yet continuing to permeate the atmosphere with the fragrant aromatics of hope and inspiration:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE SENATE CONCURRING THEREIN, That we do hereby mourn the loss, commemorate the life, and honor the distinguished service of former Speaker Pro Tempore of the Mississippi House of Representatives, the Honorable Robert



169 George Clark, Jr., and express deepest sympathy to his family and
170 friends upon his passing.

171 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
172 furnished to the family of Speaker Pro Tempore Robert George
173 Clark, Jr., and to the members of the Capitol Press Corps.

