

By: Representatives Butler-Washington,
Holloway (76th), Faulkner, Gibbs (36th),
Harness, Jackson (45th), Thompson, Summers

To: Rules

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 56

1 A RESOLUTION CELEBRATING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF THE HONORABLE
2 HIRAM RHODES REVELS OF MISSISSIPPI ON THE OCCASION OF THE 155TH
3 ANNIVERSARY OF HIS MONUMENTAL ELECTION TO THE U.S. SENATE AS THE
4 FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN TO SERVE IN CONGRESS AND ACKNOWLEDGING THE
5 HISTORICAL LEGACY OF HIS LIFETIME OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND SERVICE
6 TO THE GREAT STATE OF MISSISSIPPI AND THE ENTIRE NATION.

7 WHEREAS, this year marks the 155th anniversary of the
8 election of the Honorable Hiram Rhodes Revels, a 19th century
9 Mississippian who was the first African American in the country
10 elected to the United States Senate and who served in the upper
11 house of Congress from February 1870 to March 1871; and

12 WHEREAS, Revels was born a free man on September 27, 1827, in
13 Fayetteville, North Carolina, the son of a Baptist preacher; and

14 WHEREAS, early in his career, Revels worked as a skilled
15 barber until he was moved to teach the masses the great word of
16 the Lord, which motivated him to attend seminary and become a
17 prominent pastor ordained within the African Methodist Episcopal
18 Church (A.M.E.); and

19 WHEREAS, Revels's natural leadership qualities became more
20 apparent when he bravely organized two black regiments for the



21 Union Army during the onset of the Civil War and courageously
22 served as Chaplain during the Battle of Vicksburg and subsequent
23 47-day Siege of Vicksburg in 1863; and

24 WHEREAS, after the war, Revels faithfully continued his
25 career in the clergy and settled in Natchez in 1866 with his wife
26 and daughters, and upon becoming an alderman for the City of
27 Natchez in 1868, Revels gained a reputation as a respected member
28 of the community due to his keen intellect and eloquent oratorical
29 skills; and

30 WHEREAS, in 1869, Revels won a seat in the Mississippi State
31 Senate as a Republican representing Adams County, and he was soon
32 known to be very influential with his fellow legislators,
33 especially after giving a powerful prayer during the opening
34 session of the Senate on January 11, 1870; and

35 WHEREAS, impressed by his great natural ability and superior
36 attainments, Republicans in the Mississippi Legislature
37 overwhelmingly voted 81 to 15 to elect Hiram Revels the state's
38 United States Senator to fill the remainder of the term of former
39 Senator Albert Gallatin Brown; and

40 WHEREAS, despite many attempts over three days to block his
41 installment, the U.S. Senate ultimately voted 48 to 8 to seat him,
42 and Revels was sworn into office on February 25, 1870, breaking
43 the glass ceiling for African Americans in the United States
44 Congress; and



WHEREAS, after his Senate term ended on March 3, 1871, Revels achieved yet more firsts when he became the first president of Alcorn University (now Alcorn State University) in Claiborne County, Mississippi, the first land-grant institution for African Americans in the nation; and

WHEREAS, during a leave of absence from his university duties in 1873, Revels served a temporary appointment as the first African American and 19th Secretary of State of Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, having traveled an uncommon path to reach the pinnacle of sustained success that has garnered him a reputation of excellence and historic prominence, Senator Revels's rise ushered in a new era of political activism for African-American legislators; and

WHEREAS, Hiram Revels's uncanny skill and ability to master the mechanics of brokering relationships with both his political allies and antagonists is a blueprint continued to be used today by those desiring to serve their constituencies in modern political times; and

WHEREAS, Senator Hiram Rhodes Revels's service on Capitol Hill in 1870 still ranks among the greatest moments in American political history, even though politics and Capitol Hill have undergone extensive changes during the past 155 years; and

WHEREAS, recognized for his years of service in the governmental arena, Senator Revels's successes are undoubtedly attributable to his immense talent and consummate professionalism,



70 which are further highlighted by the praise he received from the
71 press for his well-crafted speeches and diplomatic approach to a
72 tense congressional environment; and

73 WHEREAS, Revels retired from Alcorn A&M College and his
74 political life in 1882, but he faithfully continued his religious
75 works by ministering at local A.M.E. churches and teaching
76 Theology at Shaw University (now Rust College) in Holly Springs
77 until his death on January 16, 1901; and

78 WHEREAS, it is the policy of the House of Representatives to
79 pay homage to Mississippians who are the caliber of Senator Hiram
80 Revels, who served as a trailblazing pioneer and whose remarkable
81 contributions to the State of Mississippi and the entire country
82 merit honor and respect:

83 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
84 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby
85 celebrate the life and legacy of the Honorable Hiram Rhodes Revels
86 on the occasion of the 155th anniversary of his monumental 1870
87 election to the United States Senate as the first African American
88 to serve in Congress, and acknowledge the historical legacy of his
89 accomplishments and service to the great State of Mississippi and
90 the entire nation.

91 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
92 furnished to the descendants of Hiram Rhodes Revels and to the
93 members of the Capitol Press Corps.

