

By: Senator(s) Kirby, McMahan, Harkins,  
Boyd, Hopson, Younger, Fillingane, Wiggins,  
Polk, Chassaniol, Horhn, Blount, Michel,  
DeBar, Bryan, England, Simmons (13th),  
Frazier, Barnett, Thomas

To: Rules

## SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 505

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION PAYING TRIBUTE TO THE 24-YEAR CAREER  
2 OF EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS AS A CAPITOL CORRESPONDENT WITH *THE*  
3 *ASSOCIATED PRESS* AND THANKING HER FOR HER SERVICE TO THE CITIZENS  
4 OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI.

5 WHEREAS, we join Statehouse Reporters and the citizens of the  
6 State of Mississippi in commending the 24-year career of Emily  
7 Wagster Pettus as Mississippi Capitol Correspondent and thanking  
8 her for her service; and

9 WHEREAS, since January 2001 to the present, Emily Wagster  
10 Pettus has been the Mississippi Statehouse and Political Reporter  
11 for *The Associated Press*. Her primary responsibility has been  
12 covering Mississippi politics and public policy. She also covered  
13 court cases, man-made and natural disasters, southern culture and  
14 other news; and

15 WHEREAS, prior to her service with the AP, from May 1990 to  
16 January 2001, Emily covered Mississippi politics for *The Clarion*  
17 *Ledger*. During that time she was a Beat Reporter covering Rankin  
18 County, a one-person Gulf Coast Bureau, and worked temporarily as  
19 Copy Editor for International Edition Textbooks of *USA TODAY*.



20 Prior to her service with *The Clarion Ledger*, she worked with the  
21 *Vicksburg Evening Post* as City Hall Reporter and feature writer;  
22 and

23 WHEREAS, Emily received her BA majoring in Journalism and  
24 German in 1989; and

25 WHEREAS, as news staffs diminish across the country, state  
26 government reporters have become much smaller. Those who remain  
27 in the role understand the importance of their work in our  
28 democracy. That's one reason Emily Wagster Pettus, who has been  
29 reporting on Mississippi government since 1994, was selected as  
30 the 2018 Silver Em winner, the University of Mississippi's highest  
31 award in journalism; and

32 WHEREAS, the latest Pew Research Center study about  
33 statehouse reporters found that around 1,500 U.S. journalists work  
34 to inform the public about the actions and issues of state  
35 government. Of those, nearly half do it full time, averaging 15  
36 full-time reporters per state. Pettus estimates the number of  
37 Mississippi statehouse reporters is equal to the Pew Research  
38 Center study's national average of 15; and

39 WHEREAS, while her main responsibility has been covering the  
40 Mississippi Legislature, Pettus said she has covered a variety of  
41 stories. In 2005, she covered the trial of Edgar Ray Killen, who  
42 was convicted for the 1964 killings of Civil Rights Activists  
43 James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner in Neshoba  
44 County. In 2007, she covered the federal trial of Ku Klux Klan



45 member James Ford Seale, who was convicted in the kidnapping that  
46 led to the death of two young black men, Charles Eddie Moore and  
47 Henry Hezekiah Dee, in Southwest Mississippi; and

48 WHEREAS, Will Norton, Dean of the University of Mississippi  
49 School of Journalism and News Media, said Pettus is smart, a hard  
50 worker and a terrific reporter. "She has more than a  
51 quarter-of-a-century experience," Norton said. "She has devoted  
52 herself to covering Mississippi. She has reported in-depth, on  
53 deadline and always accurately....Emily is a person of integrity.  
54 She can be trusted"; and

55 WHEREAS, Curtis Wilkie, an Overby Center Fellow and Assistant  
56 Professor of Journalism, agrees that Pettus has earned the trust  
57 of readers; and

58 WHEREAS, it is with great pride that we recognize the work of  
59 a longtime legislative reporter whose enormous civic energy has  
60 contributed to the welfare of the citizens of the State of  
61 Mississippi:

62 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF  
63 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That  
64 we do hereby pay tribute to the 24-year career of Emily Wagster  
65 Pettus as a Capitol Correspondent with *The Associated Press* and  
66 thank her for her service to the citizens of the State of  
67 Mississippi and extending the best wishes of the Legislature to  
68 Emily for her future success.



69           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to  
70 Emily Wagster Pettus and her family, forwarded to *The Associated*  
71 *Press* and be made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

