

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  
(As Adopted by the Senate)

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION PAYING TRIBUTE TO THE 30-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, the retirement of Emily Wagster Pettus from *The*  
6 *Associated Press* gives us an opportunity not only to reflect upon  
7 her career, but also a chance to pause and reflect upon the recent  
8 great changes in press coverage of the Mississippi Legislature;  
9 and

10 WHEREAS, in keeping with the small-town atmosphere of the  
11 Capitol, legislators generally called long-time reporters by their  
12 first names, it seems appropriate to refer to her in this  
13 resolution as "Emily." (Emily and other reporters called some  
14 legislators by their first names. With others, they were more  
15 formal. We have no idea how they referred to us behind our  
16 backs.); and

17 WHEREAS, before we got to know her, Emily covered Mississippi  
18 politics for *The Clarion Ledger*. During that time, she was also a  
19 Beat Reporter covering Rankin County, a one-person Gulf Coast



Bureau, and a Copy Editor for International Edition Textbooks of  
*USA TODAY*. Prior to her service with *The Clarion Ledger*, she  
worked with the *Vicksburg Evening Post* as City Hall Reporter and  
Feature Writer. She first started covering the Legislature in  
1990 for *The Clarion Ledger*, and in January 2001, she began  
covering the Legislature for *The Associated Press*; and

WHEREAS, in her career, Emily has covered the administrations  
of five Mississippi Governors; six Lieutenant Governors and four  
Speakers of the House of Representatives; countless Senators;  
Representatives; mayors; aldermen; county supervisors; sheriffs;  
police chiefs and judges; and

WHEREAS, Emily has covered more than 65 regular and special  
legislative sessions, and hundreds of committee hearings and floor  
debates during her career on issues ranging from tort reform to  
education to highways to health care to crime and economic  
development; and

WHEREAS, Emily has covered multiple campaigns for Governor,  
U.S. Congress, the Legislature and city and county offices,  
interviewing candidates and voters alike; and

WHEREAS, Emily has distinguished herself among newsmakers for  
her efforts to provide fair, balanced coverage and a range of  
perspectives; and

WHEREAS, Emily always took time to mentor and share her  
knowledge of Mississippi politics with new reporters sent to the



44 Capitol to cover the daily activity of the Legislature and state  
45 leaders; and

46 WHEREAS, as a wire reporter for *The Associated Press*, she was  
47 "always on deadline," whether covering countless emergency  
48 declarations and natural disasters such as hurricanes, ice storms  
49 or man-made events such as plane crashes, courtroom trials and  
50 cultural events; and

51 WHEREAS, Emily's byline has appeared in newspapers across the  
52 globe as she covered major events such as Hurricane Katrina, the  
53 2005 trial of Edgar Ray Killen, who was convicted for the 1964  
54 killings of Civil Rights Activists James Chaney, Andrew Goodman  
55 Michael Schwerner in Neshoba County. In 2007, she covered the  
56 federal trial of Ku Klux Klan member Ford Seale, who was convicted  
57 in the kidnapping that led to the death of two young black men,  
58 Charles Eddie Moore and Henry Hezekiah Dee, in Southwest  
59 Mississippi; and

60 WHEREAS, even as news staffs diminished across the country,  
61 state government reporters have become much smaller, Emily  
62 steadfastly continued to cover Mississippi news, telling citizens  
63 across the state and nation about events far and wide, helping to  
64 strengthen our democracy; and

65 WHEREAS, Emily received her BA majoring in Journalism and  
66 German in 1989; and



WHEREAS, Emily Wagster Pettus was honored as the 2018 Silver Em winner, the University of Mississippi's highest award in Journalism; and

WHEREAS, mentors and colleagues such as Will Norton, Dean of the University of Mississippi School of Journalism and News Media, describe Pettus as smart, a hard worker and a terrific reporter. "She has devoted herself to covering Mississippi. She has reported in-depth, on deadline and always accurately. Emily is a person of integrity. She can be trusted"; and

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

WHEREAS, when Emily came to the Capitol, there were more than a dozen reporters covering the Legislature, and the Capitol Press room was a beehive of activity, with reporters from several daily newspapers around the state using the newsroom as their Jackson bureaus. Now, no reporters work primarily from that newsroom year-round. With her departure, *The Associated Press* will no longer have a reporter covering state government in Mississippi, a truly remarkable development; and

WHEREAS, the gradual reduction in coverage of state government has made it impossible for the average citizen to obtain comprehensive coverage of the Legislature, and the practice of *The Associated Press* of covering all major developments during legislative sessions is long gone; and



92 WHEREAS, it is with great pride that we recognize the work of  
93 a long-time legislative reporter whose enormous civic energy has  
94 contributed to the welfare of the citizens of the State of  
95 Mississippi:

96 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF  
97 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That  
98 we do hereby pay tribute to the 30-year career of Emily Wagster  
99 Pettus as a Capitol Correspondent with *The Associated Press* and  
100 thank her for her service to the citizens of the State of  
101 Mississippi and extend the best wishes of the Legislature to Emily  
102 for her future success.

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

