

By: Senator(s) Jackson, Frazier, Hickman,
Thomas, Simmons (13th), Boyd, DeBar, Horhn,
McMahan, Norwood, Seymour, Simmons (12th),
Sparks, Turner-Ford, Barnett

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 514

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION MOURNING THE LOSS AND CELEBRATING THE
2 CONTRIBUTIONS AND CAREER OF MISSISSIPPI-BORN STATE AND SCREEN ICON
3 JAMES EARL JONES, WHO FORGED A PATH FOR BLACK ACTORS AND
4 INFLUENCED THE LIVES OF COUNTLESS AMERICANS THROUGH HIS STORIED
5 CAREER, AND EXPRESSING THE SYMPATHY OF THE LEGISLATURE ON THE
6 PASSING OF THIS ACTING LEGEND.

7 WHEREAS, James Earl Jones, the iconic Mississippi-born actor,
8 whose prominent roles and performances influenced individuals
9 around the globe, passed away on September 9, 2024, at the age of
10 93; and

11 WHEREAS, in a career that spanned eight decades, Jones
12 established himself as one of Hollywood's greats. On both the
13 stage and the screen, Jones captivated audiences of all ages and
14 backgrounds; and

15 WHEREAS, Jones was born on January 17, 1931, in Arkabutla,
16 Mississippi. After moving to Michigan to live with his
17 grandparents at age 5, Jones overcame a childhood stutter by
18 writing and reciting poetry at the encouragement of a high school
19 English teacher. His love of poetry eventually bloomed into a
20 career in both Shakespearean acting and spoken word; and



21 WHEREAS, after high school, Jones attended the University of
22 Michigan and joined the Reserve Officers' Training Corps. After
23 his junior year of college, he moved his focus from pre-med to
24 drama with the hope of studying something he loved before military
25 service. In 1955, Jones graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in
26 drama; and

27 WHEREAS, after completing his degree, Jones honorably served
28 his country via military service and received his commission as a
29 Second Lieutenant in the United States Army in 1953 as the Korean
30 War drew to a close. Upon being commissioned, he reported to the
31 then-named Fort Benning to attend the Infantry Officers Basic
32 Course. Eventually, his unit was sent to establish a cold-weather
33 training command in Colorado, and his battalion became a training
34 unit in the rugged terrain of the Rocky Mountains. Jones was
35 ultimately promoted to First Lieutenant; and

36 WHEREAS, upon completion of his military service, Jones moved
37 to New York City, where he studied at the American Theatre Wing;
38 and

39 WHEREAS, Jones began his illustrious acting career in
40 Michigan, where he portrayed Othello at the Ramsdell Theatre in
41 Manistee, Michigan. In addition to theatre, he also appeared in
42 the ABC radio anthology series *Theatre-Five*; and

43 WHEREAS, in 1957, Jones made his Broadway debut as an
44 understudy in *The Egghead*, before creating the feature role of
45 Edward the butler in *Sunrise at Campobello*. For the next several



46 years, Jones continued performing in New York productions of
47 *Othello, King Lear, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Measure for*
48 *Measure, Hamlet, The Blacks, and The Merchant of Venice,* among
49 others; and

50 WHEREAS, Jones made his feature film debut in *Dr. Strangelove*
51 *or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb,* before
52 quickly appearing in *The Comedians* alongside other Hollywood
53 mainstays Richard Burton, Elizabeth Taylor, and Alec Guinness;

54 WHEREAS, in 1977, Jones made his debut in his iconic
55 voiceover role as Darth Vader in George Lucas' space opera
56 blockbuster film *Star Wars: A New Hope.* He lent his voice to
57 Darth Vader for further Star Wars projects, including *Star Wars:*
58 *The Empire Strikes Back, Star Wars: Return of the Jedi, Star Wars:*
59 *Revenge of the Sith, Star Wars: Rebels, Rogue One, Star Wars: The*
60 *Rise of Skywalker,* and *Obi-Wan Kenobi,* among others. Jones' rich
61 baritone voice made Darth Vader one of the most memorable villains
62 in cinematic history; and

63 WHEREAS, among other notable roles, Jones also lent his
64 distinctive baritone voice to Mufasa in both the animated and live
65 action versions of Disney's *The Lion King.* He was the only cast
66 member from the original animated film to reprise his role for the
67 live action version, and his performance as Mufasa has long been
68 heralded as one of Disney's most celebrated and beloved
69 characters; and



70 WHEREAS, over the course of his storied career, Jones
71 received many awards for his outstanding and distinguished work.
72 In addition to numerous award nominations, he won two Primetime
73 Emmy Awards, three Tony Awards, the Honorary Academy Award for
74 Lifetime Achievement from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and
75 Sciences, a Grammy Award for Best Spoken Word, a Golden Globe
76 Award, and two NAACP Image Awards, among others. Due to these
77 honors, Jones is one of an exclusive group of entertainers to have
78 achieved EGOT status; and

79 WHEREAS, Jones was further honored for his inspirational work
80 with a National Medal of Arts in 1992, a Career Achievement Award
81 from the National Board of Review in 1995, Kennedy Center Honors
82 in 2002, the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Screen Actors
83 Guild in 2009, and the Oscar Micheaux Award from the Chicago Film
84 Critics Association in 2011; and

85 WHEREAS, after his death, James Earl Jones was honored by his
86 alma mater, the University of Michigan, as well as the NAACP,
87 SAG-AFTRA, The Public Theater, Major League Baseball, Vice
88 President Kamala Harris, President Bill Clinton, and numerous
89 members of the entertainment industry. Following his passing, The
90 *New York Times* described him as "one of the most-admired American
91 actors of all time." Additionally, the Empire State Building in
92 New York City was lit up to resemble his iconic character, Darth
93 Vader; and



94 WHEREAS, Jones is recognized as a groundbreaking pioneer for
95 African Americans for his significant roles in film, television,
96 and the stage. In 2022, the Cort Theatre, where Jones made his
97 Broadway debut in 1958, was renamed after James Earl Jones,
98 becoming the second Broadway venue named after a Black theatrical
99 artist; and

100 WHEREAS, James Earl Jones will continue to be celebrated for
101 his impact on American pop culture and the international
102 entertainment industry:

103 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
104 MISSISSIPPI, That we mourn the loss and celebrate the
105 contributions and career of Mississippi-born state and screen icon
106 James Earl Jones, who forged a path for Black actors and
107 influenced the lives of countless Americans through his storied
108 career, and express the sympathy of the Legislature on the passing
109 of this acting legend.

110 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That this resolution be presented to
111 the surviving family of James Earl Jones; forwarded to the Academy
112 of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the Academy of Television
113 Arts & Sciences, the National Academy of Television Arts &
114 Sciences, the International Academy of Television Arts and
115 Sciences, the American Theatre Wing and The Broadway League, and
116 the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences; and be made
117 available to the Capitol Press Corps.

