

By: Senator(s) Michel, Hopson, Sparks

To: Rules

## SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 528

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO MEMORIALIZE THE INFLUENTIAL LIFE  
2 AND CAREER OF MISSISSIPPI POLITICAL PIONEER AND LONGTIME CHAIRMAN  
3 OF THE MISSISSIPPI REPUBLICAN PARTY, CLARKE THOMAS REED OF  
4 GREENVILLE, MISSISSIPPI, AND EXTENDING THE SINCEREST CONDOLENCES  
5 OF THE LEGISLATURE ON HIS PASSING.

6 WHEREAS, it is with sadness that we extend the sincerest  
7 condolences of the Legislature on the passing of Clarke Thomas  
8 Reed; and

9 WHEREAS, Clarke T. Reed, businessman, Mississippi civic  
10 leader, and a key architect of post-World War II Southern politics  
11 passed away on December 8, 2024, at his home in Greenville,  
12 Mississippi. He was 96; and

13 WHEREAS, longtime Chairman of the Mississippi Republican  
14 Party and informal power broker whose reach extended to the  
15 highest levels of national and state government, "Clarke Reed was  
16 not only present at the creation of a Republican South, he was one  
17 of its creators" recalled historian Jon Meacham; and

18 WHEREAS, "When Clarke got involved in Mississippi politics,  
19 it was a one-party state controlled by conservative Democrats,"



20 recalled Curtis Wilkie, a Mississippian who covered national  
21 politics for *The Boston Globe* and became a professor of journalism  
22 at the University of Mississippi. "Clarke was good friends with  
23 Hodding Carter III, a young Greenville newspaperman and ardent  
24 Democrat. They worked quietly together to encourage a two-party  
25 system"; and

26 WHEREAS, born in Alliance, Ohio, on August 4, 1928, Clarke  
27 Thomas Reed was the son of Lyman and Kathryn Reynolds Reed.  
28 Raised in Caruthersville, Missouri, from the age of six months,  
29 Reed was educated in local public schools before attending the  
30 Columbia Military Academy in Middle Tennessee, graduating in 1946.  
31 Fascinated by flight, one of his great regrets was being too young  
32 to fly combat missions in World War II. He joined the Air Force  
33 ROTC at the University of Missouri, where he earned a degree in  
34 economics in 1950; and

35 WHEREAS, Reed moved to Greenville, in the Mississippi Delta,  
36 where he became, in the words of *The New York Times*, "one of the  
37 ablest businessmen in the South." With boarding-school classmate,  
38 Barthell Joseph, he founded the firm of Reed-Joseph International,  
39 an innovative agricultural equipment business that also pioneered  
40 the American use of Belgian deterrence technology to keep  
41 predatory and dangerous birds away from farms and airports,  
42 an enterprise Reed brought to the United States after reading  
43 about the business in Belgium and then flying to Europe to buy the  
44 company; and



WHEREAS, in 1957 he married Julia Brooks, known as Judy, a native of Nashville and the child of the Belle Meade family. The couple had three children: the writer Julia Evans Reed (1960-2020); Reynolds Crews Reed (1968-2019); and Clarke Thomas Reed, Jr., who, with Mrs. Reed, survives his father. Reed is also survived by granddaughters Brooks Henke (Bryan) and Evans Reed; nephew Brooks Corzine (Frannie); and two great grandchildren. The family wishes to acknowledge with deep gratitude Frank Liger, a faithful employee of forty years, and also Tara Stewart for the past four years; and

WHEREAS, the Reeds' house on Bayou Road in Greenville became a kind of conservative salon, a stopping-off point for visiting politicians and journalists; and

WHEREAS, Reed loved history, politics, the Presbyterian Church, Doe's steaks, the telephone, lunches at Greenville's Jim's Café, good whiskey, *National Review*, Mississippi wildlife-he was an ardent conservationist-a well-cut suit, and the market philosophy of Adam Smith; and

WHEREAS, in many ways he willed the Mississippi GOP into being, helping to deliver a unified Southern vote for Richard Nixon over Nelson Rockefeller of New York in 1968-an achievement Nixon rewarded by reportedly directing aides to "clear it with Clarke" when matters of Southern politics and patronage came up; and



69 WHEREAS, Reed's most notable hour upon the national stage  
70 came in 1976, the year Ronald Reagan challenged the incumbent  
71 President Gerald R. Ford for the Republican presidential  
72 nomination. It was a closely fought contest, and the Mississippi  
73 delegation, led by Reed, was in the balance as the GOP convention  
74 met in Kansas City. Heavily courted by the White House, the Reeds  
75 were among the guests at the Fords' state dinner for Queen  
76 Elizabeth II during the bicentennial celebrations leading up to  
77 the convention. Reed chose to support the president rather than  
78 the more conservative Reagan, a move that was among the factors  
79 that enabled Ford to prevail; and

80 WHEREAS, he was friends with Mississippi's first Republican  
81 Governor since Reconstruction, Kirk Fordice, who was elected in  
82 1991. Fordice had served on the state GOP committee with Clarke.  
83 He kept trying to build the party and elect Republicans, starting  
84 in 1968 when there were virtually none in office through the  
85 Reagan years, through the Bush presidents, and on to Donald Trump.  
86 He saw the GOP in Mississippi go from virtually no elected offices  
87 to majorities at every level. He persisted right to the end, ever  
88 the optimist; and

89 WHEREAS, "President, senators, congressmen, and governors  
90 depended on this political pioneer for counsel and leadership,"  
91 Karl Rove said. "He had a broad smile, a twinkle in his eye and a  
92 talent for friendship. He made politics not only consequential



93 but interesting and fun. The light that brightened many a  
94 political backroom and convention hall is gone."

95 WHEREAS, Clarke Reed's life honored both the Republican Party  
96 and this great state that he loved and served:

97 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF  
98 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That  
99 we do hereby memorialize the influential life and career of  
100 Mississippi political pioneer and longtime Chairman of the  
101 Mississippi Republican Party, Clarke Thomas Reed of Greenville,  
102 Mississippi, and extend the sincerest condolences of the  
103 Legislature on his passing and commend his service to his nation  
104 and his state.

105 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to  
106 the surviving family of Clarke Thomas Reed, forwarded to the  
107 President of the United States, the Governor of the State of  
108 Mississippi and to members of Mississippi's Congressional  
109 delegation and be made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

