

By: Senator(s) Butler, Blount, England,
Hopson, Thomas, Thompson

To: Rules

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 52

1 A RESOLUTION COMMEMORATING AND CELEBRATING THE 155TH
2 ANNIVERSARY OF THE HONORABLE HIRAM RHODES REVELS' MONUMENTAL
3 ACHIEVEMENT AS THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN ELECTED TO, SWORN IN,
4 AND SEATED IN THE UNITED STATES SENATE, ELECTION TO THE
5 MISSISSIPPI STATE SENATE, NINETEENTH MISSISSIPPI SECRETARY OF
6 STATE, AND FIRST PRESIDENT OF ALCORN STATE UNIVERSITY AND
7 ACKNOWLEDGING THE HISTORICAL LEGACY OF HIS LIFETIME OF
8 ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND SERVICE TO THE GREAT STATE OF MISSISSIPPI AND
9 THE ENTIRE NATION.

10 WHEREAS, this year marks the 155th Anniversary of the
11 election of the Honorable Hiram Rhodes Revels, Mississippian and
12 the first African American to serve in the United States Senate
13 from February 1870 to March 1871; and

14 WHEREAS, he was born a free man on September 27, 1827, in
15 Fayetteville, North Carolina, the son of a Baptist preacher; and

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



21 WHEREAS, Revel's natural leadership qualities became more
22 apparent when he organized two black regiments for the Union Army
23 during the onset of the Civil War and served as Chaplain during
24 the siege and ensuing Battle of Vicksburg in 1863; and

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

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

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

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

44 WHEREAS, after his Senate term ended March 3, 1871, Revels
45 achieved another first 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, he served a temporary appointment as the first African American and 19th Secretary of State of Mississippi in 1873; and

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

WHEREAS, his uncanny skill and ability to master the mechanics of brokering relationships with both his political allies and antagonists is a blueprint used by those who desire to serve their constituency during modern political times; and

WHEREAS, Senator Hiram Rhodes Revels' service on Capitol Hill in 1870 still ranks among the greatest landmarks 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' successes are undoubtedly attributable to his immense talent and consummate professionalism, which are further highlighted by the praise he received from the press for his well-crafted speeches and diplomatic approach to a tense congressional environment; and



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

76 WHEREAS, we pay homage to an individual of Senator Revels'
77 caliber, who served as a trailblazing pioneer, and whose historic
78 contributions merit honor and respect:

79 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
80 MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby commemorate and celebrate the life
81 and legacy of the Honorable Hiram Rhodes Revels on the occasion of
82 the 155th Anniversary of his monumental 1870 election to the
83 United States Senate as the first African American to serve in
84 Congress, election to the Mississippi State Senate, nineteenth
85 Mississippi Secretary of State, and first President of Alcorn
86 State University, and acknowledge the historical legacy of his
87 lifetime of accomplishments and service to the great State of
88 Mississippi and the entire nation.

89 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
90 the descendants of Hiram Rhodes Revels, forwarded to the Board of
91 Trustees of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History,
92 and made available to the members of the Capitol Press Corps.

