

**Adopted
AMENDMENT NO 1 PROPOSED TO**

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 505

BY: Senator(s) Bryan

**Amend by striking all after line 4 and inserting in lieu
thereof the following:**

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
20 Bureau, and a Copy Editor for International Edition Textbooks of
21 *USA TODAY*. Prior to her service with *The Clarion Ledger*, she
22 worked with the *Vicksburg Evening Post* as City Hall Reporter and
23 Feature Writer. She first started covering the Legislature in
24 1990 for *The Clarion Ledger*, and in January 2001, she began
25 covering the Legislature for *The Associated Press*; and

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

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

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



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

42 WHEREAS, Emily always took time to mentor and share her
43 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

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

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

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

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



87 WHEREAS, the gradual reduction in coverage of state
88 government has made it impossible for the average citizen to
89 obtain comprehensive coverage of the Legislature, and the practice
90 of *The Associated Press* of covering all major developments during
91 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.

**Further, amend by striking the title in its entirety and
inserting in lieu thereof the following:**

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.

