

By: Senator(s) Michel

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 521

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING WORLD WAR II VETERAN AND
2 FORMER STATE REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAM BRYANT RIDGWAY OF JACKSON,
3 MISSISSIPPI, WHO FLEW 14 MISSIONS OVER GERMANY AS A B-24 BOMBER
4 COMMAND PILOT.

5 WHEREAS, William Bryant Ridgway was born in Jackson,
6 Mississippi, February 12, 1919, one of five children. He
7 participated in the ROTC program at Jackson Central High School in
8 his junior and senior years and graduated with the Class of 1936.
9 He attended Millsaps College and was graduated from the University
10 of Mississippi in 1940; and

11 WHEREAS, in 1940 he received his private pilot license
12 through the Civilian Pilot Training Program in Jackson. On
13 October 10, 1941, two months before the Japanese attacked Pearl
14 Harbor, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps and joined the Aviation
15 Cadet Program at Maxwell Field in Montgomery, Alabama. After a
16 month, he was transferred with the Aviation Cadet Class of 42-E to
17 the Army's primary flying school at Decatur, Alabama. It was in
18 Decatur on Sunday afternoon, December 7, 1941, he heard Pearl
19 Harbor had been attacked by Japan and knew that he and his fellow
20 cadets were in the Army Air Corps for the duration of the war; and

21 WHEREAS, upon completion of Primary Flying School, he was
22 sent to Greenville for Basic Training in BT-13s; he graduated from
23 basic training in Greenville March 14, 1942, and reported to
24 Spence Field in Moultrie, Georgia, for advanced training in the
25 AT-6 "Texan." He finished with 103 other pilots from Spence Field
26 on May 20, 1942. The Air Force was in the middle of a huge

27 expansion program and desperately needed flight instructors. Of
28 the 103 graduates, 99 became instructors; and

29 WHEREAS, Ridgway was selected as a "Texan" instructor. He
30 completed AT-6 instructor school at Maxwell Field in June 1942 and
31 was assigned to instruct British cadets at Craig Field in Selma,
32 Alabama; and

33 WHEREAS, in October 1942 Ridgway was one of the instructors
34 sent to train fighter pilots in "Texans" at a new advanced single
35 engine flying school at Marianna, Florida. While there he
36 attended instrument training school in Bryan, Texas, and
37 instructed in Marianna until May 1944; and

38 WHEREAS, after instructing for nearly two years, he was sent
39 to Smyrna, Tennessee, for transition training in heavy four-engine
40 B-24 bombers (Liberators). He was now ordered to March Field,
41 Riverside, California, to pick up a crew and undergo further crew
42 training and on November 24, 1944, Ridgway left March Field for
43 Hamilton Field, San Francisco, for overseas assignment; and

44 WHEREAS. en route to England, he boarded the USS Vermont for
45 the trip to Liverpool, England, then by train to the 467th Bomb
46 Group, Eighth Air Force, at Rackheath, near Norwich, 90 miles
47 northeast of London. The base was about 20 miles from the English
48 Channel. He arrived at the 467th Headquarters on December 21,
49 1944, and flew his first combat mission to Koblenz, Germany, on
50 January 1, 1945, as a co-pilot; and

51 WHEREAS, because Ridgway had flown hundreds of hours as an
52 instructor and didn't come unglued in emergencies, he was soon
53 made a command pilot. Most of his 14 missions over Germany were
54 in that capacity; and

55 WHEREAS, Ridgway said he flew most of his missions at 25,000
56 feet where the temperature was 35 degrees below zero. B-24's were
57 neither pressurized nor heated, so the crew wore electric suits
58 and oxygen masks. They frequently had to break the ice that would
59 form in their masks from condensation from breathing; and

60 WHEREAS, his next assignment was Lowry Field in Denver where
61 he picked up a new crew and got checked out in the B-29 heavy
62 bombers. He was on standby to go to the South Pacific when the
63 war with Japan ended; and

64 WHEREAS, after the war, Ridgway returned to Jackson and
65 earned a law degree from the Jackson School of Law. He was
66 engaged in the oil and real estate business and served in the Air
67 Force Reserves; and

68 WHEREAS, he also served one four-year term in the Mississippi
69 House of Representatives as Representative from Hinds and Yazoo
70 Counties but did not seek reelection; and

71 WHEREAS, he served as President of the Jackson Junior Chamber
72 of Commerce and as President of the Jackson Central Lions Club.
73 He is a member of Galloway Memorial United Methodist Church and
74 has served as lay leader and chairman of the board; and

75 WHEREAS, he is married to Mary Juanita Wallace of Canton and
76 they are the parents of five children; and

77 WHEREAS, Ridgway said that after four years in the military
78 he became convinced that our country should adopt the principle of
79 "peace through strength, not for aggression but for defense." He
80 believes in a strong military; and

81 WHEREAS, it is with great pride that we recognize one of
82 Mississippi's vanishing generation of World War II combat
83 veterans, who brought honor to his community and to his state:

84 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
85 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That
86 we do hereby commend World War II veteran and former State
87 Representative William Bryant Ridgway of Jackson, Mississippi, who
88 flew 14 missions over Germany as a B-24 Bomber Command Pilot, and
89 recognize his patriotic and dedicated service to the United States
90 of America and to the State of Mississippi, and wish him and his
91 family continued success in their future endeavors.

92 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be
93 presented to Mr. Ridgway and his family and be made available to
94 the Capitol Press Corps.