

By: Senator(s) Kirby, Burton, Dearing, Frazier, Gollott, Gordon, Harvey, Hyde-Smith, Jordan, Mettetal, Morgan, Posey, Thames, Thomas, White

To: Rules

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 2

1 A RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE DEDICATED PUBLIC SERVICE OF STATE
2 FORESTER JAMES L. (JIM) SLEDGE, JR., AND CONGRATULATING HIM ON THE
3 OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT.

4 WHEREAS, James L. (Jim) Sledge, Jr., Mississippi State
5 Forester, announced his retirement, effective May 31, 2005; and

6 WHEREAS, Mr. Sledge has served with distinction as Director
7 of the Mississippi Forestry Commission since 1991, and is the
8 longest serving State Forester in the agency's 79-year history;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, Jim Sledge led his agency through reorganization in
11 the early 1990s, reducing 7 districts to 6 and reassigning work
12 responsibilities, with significant cost savings; modernized the
13 state's wildfire-fighting equipment and established a "career
14 ladder" training and advancement system for field employees; and

15 WHEREAS, under his direction, the Forestry Commission moved
16 from a fire-tower-based county fire detection and dispatching
17 system to a modern centralized dispatching system utilizing
18 computers and aircraft, with initial savings of almost \$2 Million;
19 and

20 WHEREAS, he oversaw the establishment of the Forestry
21 Commission's Federal Excess Property Program, which transfers
22 federal excess fire-fighting equipment to local volunteer fire
23 departments; the creation of a Global Information System
24 Department within his agency; and the development of the second
25 generation of genetically improved trees at the Forestry
26 Commission's forest tree improvement facility at Baxterville; and

27 WHEREAS, under his direction, the Forestry Commission
28 partnered with Alcorn State University and Mississippi Valley
29 State University to establish an underserved landowner outreach
30 program and assigned a Mississippi Forestry Commission Forester to
31 work with Alcorn State University in a continuing outreach effort;
32 and

33 WHEREAS, the Forestry Commission's Information and Education
34 Program was strengthened during Sledge's tenure, with the
35 Commission-sponsored Project Learning Tree Environmental Education
36 Program training more than 12,500 educators in this award-winning
37 curriculum, winning a second Gold Star Award in 2004 (Project
38 Learning Tree's highest international award), the first of 50
39 states to do so; and

40 WHEREAS, Mississippi's Urban and Community Forestry Program
41 also advanced under Sledge's direction, forming the Mississippi
42 Urban Forest Council (a Forestry Commission vehicle for helping
43 Mississippi cities and communities manage trees on public
44 property), which will soon achieve independent status; and

45 WHEREAS, Mr. Sledge was instrumental in establishing the Task
46 Force for Forestry Strategic Initiative for Economic Development,
47 established by Lieutenant Governor Amy Tuck, which later led to
48 the establishment of the Mississippi Institute for Forest
49 Inventory, an independent agency charged with assessing the total
50 forest resources of Mississippi; and

51 WHEREAS, State Forester Sledge served with honor as President
52 of the National Association of State Foresters and hosted that
53 prestigious organization's annual meeting here in Mississippi in
54 2004; and

55 WHEREAS, Mr. Sledge was named the 2003 "Alumni Fellow" for
56 the Mississippi State University College of Forest Resources; and

57 WHEREAS, the DeKalb native worked in the forest industry for
58 nearly 30 years prior to being appointed Mississippi State
59 Forester; and

60 WHEREAS, he is married to the former Bettye Bounds of DeKalb.
61 They have two outstanding children, Dr. J.L. (Buddy) Sledge III,
62 head of the History Department of Truett-McConnell Jr. College in
63 Cleveland, Georgia, and Jayne Jowers, an English teacher at Kemper
64 Academy in DeKalb; and

65 WHEREAS, it is with great pride that we recognize the
66 dedicated service of this public servant who has brought honor to
67 his agency, his industry and to the State of Mississippi:

68 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
69 MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby commend State Forester Jim Sledge
70 for his dedicated and exemplary professional service to the State
71 of Mississippi and sincerely wish him a long and healthy
72 retirement.

73 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
74 State Forester Sledge and members of the Mississippi Forestry
75 Commission, and be made available to the Capitol Press Corps.