

By: Representatives Buck, Woods, Gadd

To: Rules

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 23

1 A RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF MRS. BERNICE
2 E. TOTTEN AND EXPRESSING DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO HER FAMILY AND
3 FRIENDS UPON HER PASSING.

4 WHEREAS, Bernice E. Totten, born September 1, 1921, departed
5 this earthly life on Wednesday, January 31, 2007, to enter into
6 eternal rest with her Heavenly Father, causing great sorrow and
7 loss to her family and friends; and

8 WHEREAS, Mrs. Totten attended MI College where she received a
9 teaching certificate that allowed her to teach school at
10 Strickland School under the tutelage of Mrs. Euretha King and
11 Union Valley School under the tutelage of Mrs. Susie Matthews
12 before undergoing an eight-week training program at Tuskegee
13 Institute in 1968 to receive a teaching certificate in early
14 childhood education and additional studies at Rust College through
15 the Head Start Program; and

16 WHEREAS, deemed a trailblazer all of her life, Mrs. Totten
17 helped in founding the Child Development Group of Mississippi
18 (CDGM), which was the first Head Start Program, later changed to
19 ICS Head Start, one of many programs originating from the civil
20 rights struggle; and

21 WHEREAS, before her involvement with CDGM and ICS, Mrs.
22 Totten was very active in the civil rights movement, commencing
23 her work with voter registration drives in the 1950s, aiding in
24 freedom summers by housing freedom riders in her home, which
25 became the distribution headquarters for donated items sent from
26 the North; and

27 WHEREAS, Mrs. Totten overcame obstacles that presented
28 themselves during the time she sought public office, winning the
29 office of road supervisor in 1974 and progressing to serve three
30 additional consecutive terms, claiming the honor of being the
31 first African-American road supervisor in Marshall County and the
32 first African-American female to hold that position in the entire
33 state; and

34 WHEREAS, after her retirement as supervisor, during which
35 time she was faithfully supported by her late husband, Napoleon
36 Totten and their 13 children, Mrs. Totten engaged all the more in
37 helping the residents of her community, diligently executing the
38 service of a Christian and servant; and

39 WHEREAS, it is the policy of the House of Representatives to
40 commend the life of such an outstanding individual as Mrs. Totten,
41 whose life was a beacon of hope and a ray of sunshine for all who
42 have been privileged to be in her company:

43 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
44 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby
45 commend the life and legacy of Mrs. Bernice E. Totten and express
46 deepest sympathy to her family and friends upon her passing.

47 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
48 furnished to the family of Mrs. Totten and to the members of the
49 Capitol Press Corps.