

By: Senator(s) Jordan, Albritton, Posey,  
Gollott, Moffatt, Mettetal, Carmichael,  
Dawkins, Dearing, Pickering, Harden, Little,  
Horhn, Jackson (32nd), Lee (35th), White,  
Jackson (15th), King, Chaney, Burton,  
Wilemon, Fillingane, Davis, Doxey,  
Chassaniol, Williamson, Simmons, Jackson  
(11th), Thomas, Butler, Walls, Nunnelee,  
Frazier, Walley, Brown, Clarke, Kirby

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 576

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE LIFE OF WILLYE B.  
2 WHITE, THE FIRST WOMAN FROM MISSISSIPPI TO COMPETE AND WIN A MEDAL  
3 IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES AND THE FIRST 5-TIME UNITED STATES TRACK  
4 OLYMPIAN, AND EXPRESSING THE SYMPATHY OF THE LEGISLATURE.

5 WHEREAS, Willye B. White of Greenwood, Mississippi, who  
6 willed her way out of the Mississippi Delta cotton fields and  
7 became the first American track and field athlete to compete in  
8 five Olympics, died on February 7, 2007, at the age of 67, in  
9 Chicago, Illinois; and

10 WHEREAS, Willye White competed in every Olympics Game from  
11 1956 through 1972, and an injury kept her off the 1976 team. She  
12 won a Silver Medal in the long jump in 1956, when she was a  
13 16-year-old high school Sophomore, and another in the 4x100-meter  
14 relay in 1964; and

15 WHEREAS, two-time silver medalist Willye White participated  
16 on five United States Olympic teams at five Olympiads; in 1956,  
17 Melbourne, Australia; 1960, Rome, Italy; 1964, Tokyo, Japan; 1968,  
18 Mexico City, Mexico; and 1972, Munich, Germany; and

19 WHEREAS, Willye White is the first woman from Mississippi to  
20 compete in the Olympic Games and win a medal; and

21 WHEREAS, she was America's best female long jumper for almost  
22 two decades, with a career best of 21 feet 6 inches. She won nine  
23 consecutive United States outdoor championships, set seven  
24 American records and, by her count, competed in 150 nations. At  
25 5'4" and 130 pounds, she could perform weight-lifting squats with  
26 more than 380 pounds; and

27           WHEREAS, Willye White was born December 31, 1939, in Money,  
28 Mississippi, and grew up in Greenwood, where she was raised by her  
29 grandparents; and

30           WHEREAS, she started chopping cotton when she was ten, Willye  
31 told *Sports Illustrated* in 1975. The only way she could get any  
32 recognition was through sports; and

33           WHEREAS, White started track as a ten-year-old sprinter, then  
34 turned to the long jump because, for every 500 sprinters there  
35 were only two long jumpers. She later entered Tennessee State  
36 University, where the track coach was the renowned Ed Temple. In  
37 1960, she moved to Chicago and, in 1976, earned a degree in Public  
38 Health Administration from Chicago State University; and

39           WHEREAS, she started her career as a practical nurse. Then  
40 she spent 37 years working in city government as a health  
41 administrator, a director of recreational services and a creator  
42 of sports programs for young girls in housing projects. In 1991,  
43 she founded the Willye White Foundation to help children develop  
44 self-esteem; and

45           WHEREAS, as a member of 39 international sports teams over  
46 the course of her career, Willye competed in more than 150  
47 nations. She represented her sport on the U.S. Olympic Committee,  
48 was a Coach for the National Sports Festival in 1979 and 1981, was  
49 Coach and Manager for the 1981 World Cup Track and Field  
50 Championship in Brussels and Rome, and was Head Coach for the 1994  
51 Olympic Sports Festival; and

52           WHEREAS, a native of Greenwood, Mississippi, a 1959 graduate  
53 of Broad Street High School, and a graduate of Chicago State  
54 University, Willye was a member of the National Association of  
55 Sports and Physical Education Hall of Fame, the Black Sports Hall  
56 of Fame, the Women Sports Foundation Hall of Fame, the National  
57 Track and Field Hall of Fame, the Chicago Sports Hall of Fame, the  
58 Helms Hall of Fame, the Mississippi State University Hall of Fame  
59 and the Tennessee State University Hall of Fame. She was on the

60 Board of Directors of the American Council on Exercise, the  
61 Illinois Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Health and  
62 numerous other athletic boards and committees; and

63 WHEREAS, Willye had a broad range of experience as a sports  
64 commentator and broadcaster with NBC, CBS, ESPN, WTBS and Armed  
65 Forces Radio. She was the official spokesperson for the AAU  
66 Junior Olympics from 1983 through 1987; Willye was Founder and  
67 President of the Willye White Foundation and WBW Hang On  
68 Productions; and

69 WHEREAS, White is survived by a brother and a sister; and

70 WHEREAS, it is with sadness that we note the passing of this  
71 star athlete and role model for future Olympians, whose career and  
72 accomplishments brought honor to her school, her community and to  
73 the State of Mississippi:

74 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF  
75 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That  
76 we do hereby commend the life of Willye B. White, the first woman  
77 from Mississippi to compete and win a medal in the Olympic Games  
78 and the first 5-Time United States Track Olympian, and express to  
79 her surviving family the sympathy of the Legislature on her  
80 passing.

81 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to  
82 the surviving family of Willye White and be made available to the  
83 Capitol Press Corps.