

By: Representatives Felsher, Bennett, Eure,
Grady, Haney, McKnight, Crawford

To: Rules

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 58

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING AND CONGRATULATING SHIP
2 ISLAND EXCURSIONS ON THE OCCASION OF ITS 100TH ANNIVERSARY.

3 WHEREAS, Ship Island Excursions, a local family-owned company
4 that began as a summer side business to the founder's fishing
5 operations in March 1926, reaches an extraordinary milestone this
6 month when the Gulf Coast institution proudly celebrates its
7 founding and 100 years of continuous operations; and

8 WHEREAS, in the early 1900's, Peter Martin Skrmetta, a young
9 Croatian immigrant seeking improved economic conditions and a
10 better life in America, arrived in Biloxi and went to work with
11 his uncle crewing the sailing schooners that harvested millions of
12 pounds of oysters and shrimp for Biloxi's booming seafood
13 industry; and

14 WHEREAS, by the early 1920's, Skrmetta, fondly known as
15 "Captain Pete," acquired his own 56-foot diesel-powered schooner
16 named the *Pan American*, and when the shrimping industry would
17 virtually shut down in the hot summer months, the young
18 entrepreneur used his vessel to haul watermelons from Alabama to



19 the French Market and clam shells from Lake Pontchartrain back to
20 the Coast before beginning what was to become the lasting business
21 of the family - pleasure cruises into the Mississippi Sound; and

22 WHEREAS, realizing the economic potential of a tourist
23 attraction offering locals and visitors alike excursions off the
24 Coast, Captain Pete embarked on various ventures ferrying
25 passengers to and from the barrier islands over the years,
26 including to the casino and dance hall of the failed 1920's Isle
27 of Caprice resort island, and in the 30's, to his own attractive
28 resort he built on the east end of Ship Island and a fishing
29 resort operated by the American Legion Post 110 at Fort
30 Massachusetts; and

31 WHEREAS, as the number of patrons steadily increased over the
32 years, with two boats transporting thousands of visitors from
33 Biloxi in the summer months and offering evening cruises with
34 music, dancing, cocktails and gambling, Captain Pete's fleet
35 eventually grew to three increasingly larger excursion boats - the
36 1937 *Pan American Clipper*, the 1950 *Gulf Clipper*, and the 1963 *Pan*
37 *American II*; and

38 WHEREAS, Peter Martin Skrmetta, Sr., died in 1963, leaving
39 the company to his two sons, Peter Matthew and James Noel, who
40 operated two ferry services, one from Gulfport and one from
41 Biloxi, until 1986, when Peter bought his brother's Biloxi
42 business and consolidated all Ship Island Excursions' operations
43 to the Gulfport location; and



44 WHEREAS, Peter Matthew successfully grew the business until
45 his passing in the summer of 2024, and since that time, three of
46 the original Captain Pete's grandsons have run the family
47 operation, which has now provided passage to well over 1.2 million
48 Ship Island visitors over the last century; and

49 WHEREAS, currently the Ship Island ferry operates exclusively
50 out of the Yacht Harbor at Jones Park, making the City of Gulfport
51 the gateway to Gulf Islands National Seashore, and each spring,
52 the third-generation company welcomes thousands of excited
53 visitors eager to feel the ocean mist and taste the salt air, many
54 who have made the 11-mile journey across the Mississippi Sound to
55 Ship Island their annual unofficial kickoff to the long, fun-
56 filled days of summer; and

57 WHEREAS, in addition to the March through October daily trips
58 to the island, Ship Island Excursions has helped create lasting
59 memories for many of its patrons who have enjoyed one of the
60 company's year-round dolphin-watching adventures, weekend sunset
61 cocktail cruises, or chartered shoreline day or evening cruises
62 for corporate parties, class reunions and other special
63 celebrations; and

64 WHEREAS, while Ship Island Excursions is widely recognized as
65 the transportation from the mainland to the barrier islands, Gulf
66 Coast residents also see the Skrmetta family and business as a
67 strong supporter of the local community, with the company annually
68 providing transportation to beach cleanup crews, discounted boat



69 tickets to all school and youth groups, and hundreds of donated
70 tickets to fundraisers for local schools, churches and other
71 nonprofit organizations, including law enforcement youth programs,
72 along with working with the National Park Service to preserve and
73 protect the natural and historic resources within the National
74 Seashore; and

75 WHEREAS, on the momentous occasion of the 100th year of
76 unparalleled continuous service by Ship Island Excursions, it is
77 most appropriate to give special recognition to this outstanding
78 Mississippi institution which, as a source of adventure,
79 relaxation and lifelong happy memories, is deemed to be a treasure
80 by the Gulf Coast community and countless fellow Mississippians
81 and visitors to the Magnolia State:

82 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
83 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE SENATE CONCURRING
84 THEREIN, That we do hereby commend and congratulate Ship Island
85 Excursions on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of its
86 founding and extend sincerest wishes to the Skrmetta family for
87 the company's continued growth and prosperity for many years to
88 come.

89 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
90 furnished to Ship Island Excursions and to the members of the
91 Capitol Press Corps.

