MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE REGULAR SESSION 2026

By: Representatives Denton, Ford (54th), Harness

To: Rules

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 58

A RESOLUTION MOURNING THE LOSS AND COMMEMORATING THE LIFE, LEGACY AND DISTINGUISHED ATHLETIC AND COMMUNITY SERVICE OF MR. MARK ANTHONY SMITH, SR., AND EXPRESSING DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS UPON HIS PASSING.

WHEREAS, "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the Heaven," and as such, the grand architect of the universe, the immaculate author and finisher of our souls' destiny, summoned the mortal presence of dearly beloved, Mr. Mark Anthony Smith, Sr., to eternal rest on February 9, 2026, as he made life's final transition from earthly travailing to heavenly reward at the age of 51, rendering great sorrow and immeasurable loss to his family, friends and the entire Vicksburg community; and

WHEREAS, born on August 28, 1974, in the Kings community of Vicksburg, Mississippi, to the late Milton Smith, Jr., and the late Mary Carson Smith, Mark was the second-born of their loving union and was reared upon the firm foundation of faith, family and community, values that became the compass by which he charted the course of his remarkable life; and

WHEREAS, at an early age, Mark confessed Christ at Harris Temple Church of God in Christ in the Kings community under the leadership of Pastor Norwood, anchoring his life in the unshakeable truth that "the Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want," and carrying that quiet assurance from the sanctuary pew to the roaring stadium lights; and

WHEREAS, from childhood, Mark's natural athletic ability shone with uncommon brilliance, and during his formative years within the Vicksburg-Warren School District, he established himself as a formidable presence on both the basketball court and football field, earning honors including Most Outstanding Linebacker, Most Valuable Player, Best Offensive Player, Best Rebounder and Player of the Week, and distinguishing himself as a three-year letterman whose strength and discipline reflected the spirit of excellence; and

WHEREAS, upon graduating from Vicksburg High School, Mark advanced his athletic pilgrimage to Navarro Community College, where he was recognized as the number one defensive player in the nation, before transferring to Hinds Community College, where he anchored one of the most dominant defensive units in junior college football, leading the team to the top-ranked rushing defense and the number two overall defense in the nation, earning Junior College All-American honors and helping secure the 1994 Mississippi state championship; and

WHEREAS, Mark's relentless pursuit of greatness carried him to Auburn University, where he played defensive lineman for two seasons before being selected in the seventh round of the 1997 National Football League Draft by the Arizona Cardinals, embarking upon a six-year professional career that included four seasons with the Cardinals and two seasons with the Cleveland Browns, during which he recorded 191 total tackles, 20 sacks, two forced fumbles, and earned All-Rookie Team honors, including a remarkable nine-sack season in 1998 as the Cardinals advanced to the second round of the playoffs; and

WHEREAS, though his achievements on the gridiron were extraordinary, Mark's greatest victories were not measured in sacks or statistics, but in the hearts he uplifted, the children he encouraged, and the example he set as a proud son of Vicksburg, of whom it was said, "He was a tremendous person...He had a beautiful smile and he always had time to talk to the kids"; and

WHEREAS, following his retirement from professional football, Mark continued to build legacy upon legacy, being inducted into the Vicksburg-Warren School District Hall of Fame and the Hinds Community College Sports Hall of Fame, and venturing into entrepreneurship as the founder of Smith Construction, LLC, and the proprietor of River City Cigars and Brew, one of the first premium cigar establishments in Vicksburg, faithfully serving the community for more than 12 years; and

WHEREAS, a devoted father, grandfather, brother, uncle, mentor and friend, Mark carried himself with charismatic warmth, a radiant smile and a generous spirit that reflected the words of Proverbs 20:7, "The righteous man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him"; and

WHEREAS, though he has traversed the river of life to reunite with those who answered God's summons before him, including his beloved parents, grandparents, nephew Jamal Sims, special uncle Kenny Ray Smith, and a host of loved ones, his legacy, if woven into song, would rise as a triumphant hymn echoing through the corridors of time, a refrain of perseverance, humility and unwavering love that will forever be cherished in the hearts of his survivors, including: children, Ivy Raheem, Mark Smith II, Madison Smith, Milton Smith, Maximus Smith and Matthew Smith; granddaughters, Maliah and Aaliah Smith; siblings, Raymond (Sharde) Gray, Deidra (Arthur) Sims, Donna Smith, Veronica Mitchell and Erica Smith; special aunt, Sadie Carson Clark; special friends, Mary Morgan, Mary Cole, Naya Hopkins, Liron Thomas, Reggie Moss, Farris Dotson, Jerry Walton, Johnny L. Reynolds, Sr., Former Mayor George Flaggs, Fred Davenport, Tyrone Jenkins, Garry Lewis, Grady Jackson; and a host of relatives, teammates, colleagues and friends whose lives were enriched by his presence; and

WHEREAS, we encourage his family to find solace in the promise of Revelation 21:4, wherein it is recorded, "And God shall

wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away," and to rest in the assurance that Mark fought a good fight, finished his course and kept the faith until the hour of his departure was at hand; and

WHEREAS, it is the policy of the House of Representatives to take momentary pause to respectfully acknowledge the ember of light that was the life of Mr. Mark Anthony Smith, Sr., whose strength on the field, compassion in the community and faith in God illuminated the paths of all who encountered him along this earthly sojourn:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby mourn the loss and commemorate the life, legacy and distinguished service of Mr. Mark Anthony Smith, Sr., whose life was a beacon upon the hill of Warren County, shining brightly for his family, his community and his state, and express sincere and deepest sympathy to his family and friends upon his passing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be furnished to the family of Mr. Mark Anthony Smith, Sr., and to the members of the Capitol Press Corps.