

Chapter No. 2198

11/SS26/R1289.1

JN 1A<sup>s</sup>/SG

***SENATE***  
***CONCURRENT RESOLUTION***  
***No. 624***

Originated in Senate

*Herbert S. Jones*

Secretary

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 624

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE CIVIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF VETERAN CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER, SOLDIER AND BUSINESSMAN HANK THOMAS.

WHEREAS, Hank Thomas is a leader who has stood for freedom and democracy from many perspectives as a Civil Rights leader, as a wounded Vietnam soldier and as a successful entrepreneur, who embodies the principles of free enterprise; and

WHEREAS, in business, Hank Thomas is President of Victoria Hospitality Properties Inc., which owns and operates Marriott Hotel franchises. He is also Vice President of companies that own and operate McDonald franchises. However, personal experiences set him apart. He is a veteran Civil Rights foot soldier with 22 arrests, an original Freedom Rider, a Vietnam War Purple Heart recipient and a civic leader; and

WHEREAS, Hank Thomas was one of the original Freedom Riders who traveled through the South on Greyhound buses in 1961, protesting segregated facilities at bus stations along the way. They met with much violence, including mob beatings and firebombings; and

WHEREAS, today 40 years later, Hank Thomas is taking part in an anniversary tour of the South, sponsored by Greyhound, where the surviving Freedom Riders were greeted by mayors and presented with apologies and civic honors in the same places where they had been so mistreated decades earlier. Thomas was also one of the founders of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), one of the leading Civil Rights groups of the 1960s. With the

boldness of youth, SNCC went into the most difficult areas to organize the movement for racial equality; and

WHEREAS, the legendary attorney William Kunstler, who represented Thomas in the Freedom Rider trial, wrote about him in his 1966 book "*Deep in My Heart*." More recently, Pulitzer Prize-winner David Halberstam wrote at length about Thomas in his book "*The Children*" (1998) that deals with the student sit-in leaders and what they did with their lives; and

WHEREAS, Hank Thomas has served on the boards of the APEX Museum, the Bulter Street YMCA (a local chapter of the Boys and Girls Club) and other civic and service organizations in the Atlanta area since 1968. He continues to serve on the Board of Trustees of the Piney Woods Country Life School. Hank is a life member of the NAACP, and an active fundraiser for the United Negro College Fund; and

WHEREAS, other notable Freedom Riders included: James L. Farmer, Jr., US Representative Bob Filner (D-CA), US Representative John Lewis (D-GA), William Mahoney, Wally Nelson, James Peck, Ruby Doris Smith-Robinson, Delores Lynch Williams, Fred Douglas Clark, Sr., MacArthur Cotton, Jesse L. Harris, Mary Harrison Lee, Peter Stoner, Eddie Jean Thomas, Hezekiah Watkins, Tommie Watts, Jr., and Diane Nash; and

WHEREAS, Hank Thomas' positive outlook celebrates the New Mississippi and his work as Chair of the National Advisory Board of the Mississippi Freedom 50th Celebration helps carry the message nationally and internationally that Mississippi is a new place and that Mississippi is on the move, and when the "Fiftieth Anniversary of the Freedom Riders" celebration comes to our state in May 2011, it will be a huge boost for our state in so many ways:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That we do hereby recognize the civic contributions of veteran Civil

Rights leader, notable Freedom Rider, Vietnam veteran and successful businessman Hank Thomas, and we welcome him to Mississippi on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the "The Freedom Rides of 1961" and invite all Mississippians to join in this celebration of reconciliation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to Hank Thomas, forwarded to the Governor and the Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History and be made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

ADOPTED BY THE SENATE  
February 24, 2011

  
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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
March 1, 2011

  
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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES