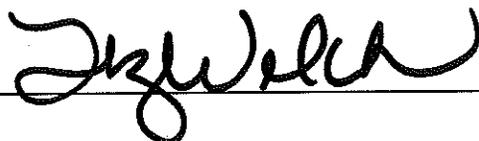


Chapter No. 2057  
14/SS26/R75  
aj lec/tb

**SENATE**  
**CONCURRENT RESOLUTION**  
**No. 503**

Originated in Senate



Secretary

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 503

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A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION MOURNING THE LOSS AND COMMENDING THE LIFE AND PUBLIC SERVICE OF FORMER SENATOR BILLY HOWARD THAMES AND EXPRESSING THE SYMPATHY OF THE LEGISLATURE ON HIS PASSING.

WHEREAS, the Legislature and the State of Mississippi lost a wonderful friend, colleague, gentleman and enlightened lawmaker with the death of former State Senator Billy Howard Thames, 69, on Tuesday, September 10, 2013. Senator Thames was an effective Chairman of several Senate committees and was instrumental in the enactment of mental health reform legislation; and

WHEREAS, born April 2, 1944, the son of Leland "Bill" and Cleo Thames, Billy Howard Thames grew up in rural Simpson County just outside of Magee, Mississippi. After graduating from Magee High School and Hinds Community College, he received a degree in Business Administration from the University of Southern Mississippi. In 1969 he established a farm and light industrial equipment business in Mize, Mississippi. A natural salesman, he received the top Agricultural Tractor Sales Award for a five-state area in 1973. Billy also used his love of music and his rich bass

voice to direct music in churches for over 25 years. In 1998 Senator Thames enrolled at Mississippi State University and in 2000 earned a Master's degree in Public Policy and Administration. He was inducted into Pi Alpha Alpha, the Honor Society for Public Administration. He was also a graduate of the State Executive Development Institute; and

WHEREAS, feeling drawn to serve his God and help others, his lifelong passion, he entered the realm of public service. Senator Thames first entered politics in 1976 when he was elected to the Smith County School Board. He ran for the Mississippi State Senate in 1979, won, and was reelected 7 times representing Smith, Jasper, Clarke and portions of Scott and Jones Counties. Senator Thames served as Chairman of a number of Senate committees and subcommittees since he was first elected. When he retired from the Senate, he was serving his second term as Chairman of the Fees, Salaries and Administration Committee and was serving as Legislative Advisor to the State Personnel Board, the Institute for Technology Development, Information Technology Services, and the Public Employees' Retirement System. He previously chaired the Agriculture Committee and was Vice Chairman of the Appropriations Committee; and

WHEREAS, Billy used his tenure in the Senate to take on causes of those who could not help themselves. For many years he handled the budget for the Department of Mental Health, becoming familiar with the agency mission and developing a great compassion

for the needs of the individuals it serves. He was instrumental in helping to secure funds to expand services to Mississippi's citizens with mental illness and mental retardation. In 1996 Senator Thames convened a committee to study the needs of persons with mental illness and their families and, as a result, authored the 1997 Mental Health Reform Act (Senate Bill No. 2100) which made sweeping changes to mental health service, including the creation of the Crisis Intervention Center System. His gift of persuasive public speaking aided him in advancing many causes near to his heart and the bill passed in one legislative session. For this accomplishment, the Central Mississippi Crisis Intervention Complex was named in his honor; and

WHEREAS, Billy served for 28 years in the Senate, and in 2008 made the decision to retire having been successfully elected 8 times. He formed his own governmental relations company, "The Thames Advantage," along with his wife, Ann, and took on issues in which he believed to advocate with the Mississippi Legislature; and

WHEREAS, a true statesman, Senator Thames received 29 awards as Legislator of the Year and for outstanding service, including the first "Billy H. Thames Award," created by the Mental Health Association which is now given to legislators who make significant contributions to mental health issues; the Mississippi Psychiatric Association; Mississippi Families as Allies; the Southeast Chapter of American Association on Mental Retardation; the Mississippi

Mental Health/Mental Retardation Council; the Mississippi Alliance for the Mentally Ill; and the Mississippi Primary Health Care Association; and

WHEREAS, as Chairman of the Agriculture Committee, Billy was widely known and admired for handling the most difficult issues to come before the Legislature with skillful organization and credibility, including the "chicken bill" and the "hog bill."

More recently, he was responsible for enacting the motor vehicle fleet management legislation which had been debated for many years; and

WHEREAS, all through his life, Billy was a lover of music and sang bass for many years with the gospel quartet, "The Dixieland Quartet." In his honor, three of the original members sang at his memorial service. Billy served as Minister of Music in many churches in rural south Mississippi over the course of many years. He loved acquiring real estate, and enjoyed success with tree farming and owning rental property until the time of his death. Most of all, Billy exuded kindness, warmth, humor and love. He was an exemplary Christian man, always putting others first; and

WHEREAS, with his many accomplishments, he was most proud of his surviving family: his wife, Ann; his daughters: Lisa Thames Williams (Mark) of Seattle, Washington, Lori Thames Grimes (Ricky) of Mize, Mississippi, and Belinda Thames Arrington (Jay) of Mize, Mississippi; his sister, Jane Pittman of Brandon; his grandchildren: Sidney Byrd, Brittney Byers, Jordan Foster, Jace

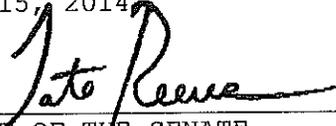
Foster, Haley Sykes and Jaylin Arrington; three great-grandchildren; two nieces; two nephews; and numerous aunts, uncles and cousins; and

WHEREAS, the galaxy of Mississippi Senators has lost one of its brightest stars, the Mississippi Senate has lost one of its most able, loyal, and lovable members and the State of Mississippi one of its most devoted and respected citizens:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That we do hereby mourn the loss and commend the life and legacy of public service of former Senator Billy H. Thames of Brandon, Mississippi, and express to his family the sympathy of the Legislature on his passing and our thanks for sharing Billy with us and with the State of Mississippi.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to the family of Senator Billy Thames, transmitted to the Mississippi Board of Mental Health, and made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

ADOPTED BY THE SENATE  
January 15, 2014

  
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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
January 27, 2014

  
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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES