

Chapter No. 2123  
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**SENATE**  
**CONCURRENT RESOLUTION**  
**No. 538**

Originated in Senate



Secretary

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 538

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING BILLY J. "BILLY" ORR UPON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT AS THE LONGTIME EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE MISSISSIPPI STATE FAIR COMMISSION AND THANKING HIM FOR HIS LEADERSHIP DURING A PERIOD OF UNPARALLELED AND EXCITING GROWTH OF THE LARGEST FAIR IN THE DEEP SOUTH.

WHEREAS, as Executive Director of the Mississippi State Fair Commission, Billy Orr has steered the State Fairgrounds through a period of unparalleled growth in which the State Fairgrounds has emerged as the principal economic engine for downtown Jackson. Billy Orr was Executive Director of the Mississippi State Fairgrounds from 1978 until his retirement in 1999. He came back in 2009, and has retired again but only from his fairground duties. He will remain on staff as the Public Relations Director for the Mississippi State Fair Commission. He has served under three Commissioners of Agriculture and Commerce: Jim Buck Ross, Lester Spell and Cindy Hyde-Smith; and

WHEREAS, Billy J. Orr was born on June 25, 1933, in the Community of Chester, located in the Red Hills of Choctaw County. Orr's wife, Delois, is deceased and he has three children, one

girl and two boys. Orr graduated from Mississippi State University with a degree in Forestry. He served in the U.S. Army on active duty and in the Army Reserves for 26 years before retiring as a Colonel. After his military duty, he was a Forester with headquarters in Brandon, Mississippi. Orr then became the Manager of the Rankin County Chamber of Commerce. On July 1, 1978, Billy Orr was appointed Executive Director of the Mississippi State Fair Commission. Ten months later, the Great Easter Flood of 1979 covered the entire fairgrounds with water and every building had water from four to eight feet deep. The damage had a cost of \$3 Million. Fifty percent of these funds came from the Fair Commission's special fund account; and

WHEREAS, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Billy was responsible for supervising much progress on Fairground renovation and purchase of property. In the early 1990s, the Legislature gave the Fair Commission authority to spend \$19 Million on specified projects, one of which was the state-of-the-art Kirk Fordice Equine Center at a cost of \$9 Million; new elevators for the Coliseum and other requirements, including new paving and new fencing around the 105 acres, were installed; and new entrance gates and roads, security lighting, and other security measures were added as part of the local highway; and

WHEREAS, Billy was instrumental in urging the Legislature to authorize the Fair Commission to purchase land and property with \$1.5 Million in special funds. The steel building with 1,003

horse stalls was purchased for \$450,000.00 and the shop next to the Armory was purchased for approximately \$45,000.00. All Fair Commission funds paid the cost of purchasing the land and buildings; and

WHEREAS, Billy is proud of the Dixie National Livestock Show and Rodeo which was established in 1964 with \$100,000.00 from the Legislature. The rodeo has shown growth since the beginning and increased in popularity as top billing entertainment. Keeping down ticket cost has been a major influence on confined growth. The seating capacity for the rodeo is 6,000 and each show averages 5,000 fans per show. In 2015, the Mississippi Fairgrounds hosted the largest Rodeo east of the Mississippi River and was voted by American Rodeo Bull Riders Association as one of the top 5 best indoor rodeos in America; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, without question the Mississippi State Fair was the largest and had the greatest number of fairgoers in the Deep South. The 155th Fair that ended on October 12, 2014, had a record-breaking attendance of 712,798. In the 1970s, the fair attendance was approximately 200,000 annually. The Mississippi State Fair has been the most popular event in Mississippi each year. Under Billy's leadership, the Biscuit Booth was added and success was instant. In 2014, over 110,000 free biscuits were given away. The entertainment pavilion had top billing performance with free admission every day and attracted very large crowds. Children under six had free admission every day. Billy

has been responsible for the staging, planning and presentation of the Mississippi State Fairs. Billy has proven himself an ally of families by presenting wholesome and clean entertainment at the Fairgrounds on a regular basis at a reasonable cost; and

WHEREAS, Billy has been a faithful and enthusiastic supporter of the youth organizations in this state, including 4-H Clubs, Future Farmers of America and the High School Basketball Athletic Association; and

WHEREAS, Billy is proud of his three successful children: Whitney (MDA Division of Tourism), Joey (former Director of the Veterans Memorial Stadium and presently with the Department of Finance and Administration), and John. Billy has set a standard of excellence in his field including ethics, integrity, civility, courtesy and adherence to the Golden Rule. His tenure as Executive Director has honored both the Mississippi State Fair Commission and this great state that he loved and served:

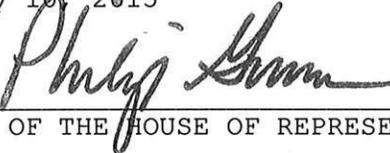
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That we do hereby recognize Billy J. "Billy" Orr upon the occasion of his retirement as the longtime Executive Director of the Mississippi State Fair Commission and thanking him for his leadership during a period of unparalleled and exciting growth of the largest fair in the deep south, and offer him our most sincere wish for future success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to Billy Orr and his family, forwarded to the Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce and the Mississippi Fair Commission, and made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

ADOPTED BY THE SENATE  
January 29, 2015

  
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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
February 10, 2015

  
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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES