Chapter No. 2136

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3/19/13

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION No. 589

Originated in Senate Liz Welch Secretary

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 589

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE DEDICATED MEN AND WOMEN OF THE MISSISSIPPI HIGHWAY PATROL ON THE OCCASION OF ITS 75TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION.

WHEREAS, the motto of Mississippi and the Mississippi Highway Patrol, "Virtute Et Armis," is befitting. It is a Latin phrase meaning by virtue and arms. Virtue is defined as moral excellence, goodness and righteousness, qualities that define the character of an individual and which formulates the core beliefs of the Mississippi Highway Patrol; and

WHEREAS, on April 1, 1938, Senate Bill No. 161 was signed into law creating the Mississippi Highway Safety Patrol under the supervision of an officer to be known as the Commissioner of Public Safety. In honor of the 75th Anniversary, the Mississippi Highway Patrol is holding a Commemoration Ceremony on April 5, 2013, at the Department of Public Safety Headquarters; and

WHEREAS, the initial act provided for 53 patrolmen and additional personnel, including a Commissioner, Chief of Patrol, Director of the Driver License Bureau, Chief Record Clerk,

stenographer, and 5 assistants allotted to the Driver License Bureau. Major Thomas Butler Birdsong was appointed Commissioner and Captain Webb Burke was made Chief of Patrol. In accordance with the provisions of the act, Major Birdsong, then taking the rank of Colonel, conducted the first Recruit Training School at Camp Shelby near Hattiesburg, Mississippi. From 3,300 applicants, 633 were selected to take competitive physical and mental examinations. From those, 97 were selected as recruits to attend school. Of the recruits, 53 were chosen upon graduation as patrolmen and 13 were placed on reserve; and

WHEREAS, the following synopsis of the creation of the patrol gives a vivid description of how it was to be among those men with a mission: "On a scorching hot Friday in 1938, patrolmen paraded from Camp Shelby to Jackson, and passed in review down Capitol Street before Governor White and other state dignitaries, where they were officially sworn into service as the state's Traffic Law Enforcement Agency. The following Monday morning, June 20, they reported to their assigned stations to become living legends as 'Iron Men' on 'Iron Horses.'" (Harley Davidson motorcycles were the primary transportation); and

WHEREAS, Colonel Birdsong - soldier, lawman, organizer of the Mississippi Highway Safety Patrol and on the state's Probation and Parole Board - died March 17, 1982, at age 87. His public service career spanned a half-century and left a lasting stamp on the administration of criminal justice in Mississippi. During his

tenure, he set high standards that would guide the department through many challenges in law enforcement; and

WHEREAS, the modern-day Department of Public Safety has eight divisions. They are: the Highway Safety Patrol, which includes nine enforcement troops, the Motor Carrier Division, the Bureau of Investigation, the Driver Services Bureau, and Patrol Support; the Bureau of Narcotics; the Crime Laboratory; the State Medical Examiner; Public Safety Planning; Office of Administrative Support; the Mississippi Law Enforcement Officers' Training Academy; and the Office of Homeland Security. The department's most visible component continues to be its uniformed patrol officers. In addition to enforcing traffic laws on state and federal highways, state troopers are specially trained to locate and interdict the transport of drugs; and

WHEREAS, in 1947, Colonel Birdsong organized the Mississippi Bureau of Investigation to assist with criminal investigations throughout the state. The following men were commissioners during the 1940s: Thomas B. Birdsong, 1938-1940; Herman O. Bailey, January 1940-April 1940; Tom P. Brady, 1940-1943; J.R. "Bob" Gilfoy, 1943-1944; Fred Todd, Interim Commissioner 1944-1944; Con R. "Red" Bradley, 1944-1946; and; Colonel Birdsong returned for his second term in officer from 1946-1956. Chiefs of Patrol during the 1940s were: Webb Burke, 1938-1940; Aaron Byrd, 1940-1942; Fred Todd, 1942-1944; and L.C. Hicks, 1944-1956; and

WHEREAS, during the 1950s, the driver licensing program was enlarged, safety education was expanded, and the communications systems and equipment were improved. Chiefs of Patrol included B.S. "Bill" Hood who served from 1956-1960; and

WHEREAS, in 1963, the Legislature established a central police training academy, which was dedicated in 1966. Patrol cadets spent 16 weeks at the academy in training for Mississippi's premier law enforcement agency. The following served as Commissioners during the 1960s: Tom Scarbrough, 1956-1960; Thomas B. Shelton, May 1960-December 1960; Colonel Birdsong, 1961-1968 for his third term in office; and Giles Crisler, 1968-1972 (the first commissioner to rise from the ranks of the Patrol). Chiefs of Patrol during these years were: Dave P. Gayden, 1960-1962; R.L. Morgan, 1962-1964; A.D. Morgan, 1964-1968; and J.D. Gardner, 1968-1972; and

WHEREAS, after landmark litigation, the ranks of sworn MHP officers were integrated and the first African-American officers were trained and hired. The T.B. Birdsong Memorial Headquarters Building, the first in Mississippi to comply with environmental standards, was dedicated in 1976. Approximately 150 people staffed the six-floor, 60,000 square foot complex. During the legislative session of 1971, the Mississippi Bureau of Drug Enforcement was created with 15 agents and was placed under the Mississippi Health Department. On July 1, 1972, the name of the agency was changed to the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics (MBN)

and attached to the Department of Public Safety. The number of agents has increased to 100. During these years, the Commissioners were: Wood Stringer, Jr., Interim Commissioner, January 1972-March 1972; W.O. "Chet" Dillard, 1972-1976; and James Finch, 1976-1980. Wood Stringer also served as Chief of Patrol, 1972-1976; as well as M. Clyde Pardue, 1976-1980; and

WHEREAS, in the 1980s, women joined the ranks as sworn Mississippi Highway Patrol officers. April 1, 1988, marked the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of the Mississippi Highway Safety Patrol. More than 1,000 people congregated at the Department of Public Safety Headquarters Building in Jackson to join in the 50th Anniversary Celebration. At this ceremony, a 12-foot-tall monument was dedicated by the Mississippi Highway Patrol Benefit Association in memory of the officers who gave their lives in the line of duty. To date, 32 officers have made the ultimate sacrifice to the State of Mississippi. The emphasis on narcotics interdiction increased dramatically in 1988 when narcotics trafficking surged. The Legislature authorized a major expansion and renovation of the Training Academy, renovations to the Crime Laboratory, and the construction of offices and facilities for the State Medical Examiner. Commissioners included: Donald Butler, Interim Commissioner, January 1980-March 1980; General Sidney B. Berry, 1980-1984; James L. Roberts, Jr., 1984-1988 (later a Justice of the Supreme Court); and Louisa O. Dixon, 1988-1992 (first female commissioner). Chiefs of Patrol

included: Donald Butler, 1980-1984; George Saxon, 1984-1987; D.D. Cvitanovich, 1987-1988; and David R. Huggins, 1988-1992; and

WHEREAS, in 1991, major renovations to the Training Academy were completed allowing expanded training opportunities for all law enforcement personnel, including local, county and state officers. Retired FBI Agent Jim Ingram served as Commissioner 1992-2000. The Chiefs of Patrol included: Jay Clark, 1992-1995; Jimmy Stringer, 1995-1997; and Thomas Ward, 1997-2000; and

WHEREAS, with the turn of the century and the aftermath of September 11, 2001, a new component was added to the department: the Office of Homeland Security, dedicated to coordinating with other state and federal agencies. In addition, the department initiated Mississippi's New Driver's License; Identity Fraud Unit; Amber Alert System; Sex Offender Registry; Seat Belt Awareness; Internet Accessibility; New District Headquarters; New Crime Laboratories; DNA Testing; New Fingerprint Technology; Website Improvements; and quicker "turn-around" time on cases in the Crime Laboratory, reducing the backlog of cases to a minimum. Commissioners included: Ron Ford, Interim Commissioner, January 2000-March 2000; David R. Huggins, 2000-2004; Rusty Fortenberry, 2004-2005; George Phillips, 2005-2007; Charlie Williams, Interim Commissioner, 2007-2008; Stephen Simpson, 2008-2011; and Albert Santa Cruz, 2011-present. Chiefs of Patrol included: L.M. Claiborne, 2000-2004 (first African-American); Marvin Curtis,

2004-2006; Michael Berthay, 2006-2010; Albert Santa Cruz, 2010-2011; and Donnell Berry 2011, - present; and

WHEREAS, during its first 75 years, the Mississippi Highway Safety Patrol has remained a professional, thoroughly competent, and highly regarded state law enforcement agency with an authorized strength of 650 troopers. It has never departed from the concept begun by Colonel Birdsong of a service-oriented organization, dedicated to keeping the Mississippi highways as safe as possible and Mississippi citizens free of the fear of lawlessness:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That we do hereby join the law enforcement community in the State of Mississippi in paying tribute to the dedicated men and women of the Mississippi Highway Patrol and honor the past 75 years, and remind all citizens of this state that the reason government came into being thousands of years ago was to SERVE AND PROTECT THE PUBLIC.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to the Commissioner of Public Safety and the Chief of the Mississippi Highway Patrol on the occasion of the 75th Anniversary

Commemoration Ceremony on April 5, 2013, be transmitted to the Governor, and made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

ADOPTED BY THE SENATE
March 15, 2013

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
March 19, 2013

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES