

1 State of Arkansas  
2 84th General Assembly  
3 Second Extraordinary Session, 2003  
4

Call Item ##

HMR 1001

5 By: Representative Edwards  
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## 8 HOUSE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

9 MOURNING THE DEATH OF JAMES T. WHITEHEAD AND  
10 HONORING HIM AS A CHAMPION OF EDUCATION.  
11

### 12 Subtitle

13 MOURNING THE DEATH OF JAMES T. WHITEHEAD  
14 AND HONORING HIM AS A CHAMPION OF  
15 EDUCATION.  
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18 WHEREAS, the accomplished writer, poet, and teacher, James T. Whitehead  
19 of Fayetteville, Arkansas died Friday, August 15, 2003, at the age of sixty-  
20 seven (67); and  
21

22 WHEREAS, Mr. Whitehead was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on March 15,  
23 1936, grew up in Jackson, Mississippi, and stood six feet five inches (6'5")  
24 tall by the time he went to Vanderbilt University on a football scholarship,  
25 where he met William Harrison, the budding writer who became his life-long  
26 friend and associate; and  
27

28 WHEREAS, as a student Mr. Whitehead had a keen intellect, a firm sense  
29 of justice on the race issue that was roiling the South at the time, and a  
30 fully formed ferocity on a broad range of thought from the painting of  
31 Vermeer to the theology of St. Augustine; and  
32

33 WHEREAS, Mr. Whitehead left Vanderbilt with a bachelor's degree in  
34 philosophy and a master's degree in English, graduated from the Creative  
35 Writing Program at the University of Iowa, and then joined William Harrison  
36 to found a similar program at the University of Arkansas; and



1  
2 WHEREAS, at the University of Arkansas Mr. Whitehead began a love  
3 affair with all things "Razorback" and was one of the most ardent supporters  
4 of both men and women's athletic programs; and  
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6 WHEREAS, the Master of Fine Arts Program Mr. Whitehead established at  
7 the University of Arkansas in conjunction with his friend and poet, Miller  
8 Williams, became one of the nation's most acclaimed, with students including  
9 Barry Hannah, Ellen Gilchrist, and others who have made their mark in  
10 fiction, poetry, translation, and film; and  
11

12 WHEREAS, in 1971, Mr. Whitehead, then a poet and teacher at the  
13 University of Arkansas, published the story of Sonny Joiner, an oversized  
14 former football player and a man of excesses, intellectual and otherwise,  
15 passionate about history, theological discourse, painting, politics,  
16 quarreling, literature, and sports -- much like himself; and  
17

18 WHEREAS, this coming-of-age novel "Joiner", Mr. Whitehead's only  
19 published novel, about segregationist Mississippi has received critical  
20 acclaim; and  
21

22 WHEREAS, Mr. Whitehead, known as a skilled sonneteer favoring a  
23 conversational style that drew on his affection for the country Southerner,  
24 also published four (4) books of poetry, namely "Domains", "Local Men",  
25 "Actual Size", and "Near Hand",  
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27 NOW THEREFORE,

28 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EIGHTY-FOURTH GENERAL  
29 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:  
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31 THAT the House of Representatives mourns the passing of James T.  
32 Whitehead, and honors his years of service to the state and community as a  
33 writer, poet, teacher, and champion of education.  
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