

SENATE RESOLUTION 108
By Williams

A RESOLUTION To honor the memory of legendary guitarist
Chester Burton "Chet" Atkins.

WHEREAS, The members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the death of Chet Atkins, one of the preeminent guitarists of the past century; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Atkins was an extraordinarily gifted musician and a major positive factor in the Country Music industry for many years; his accomplishments as a guitarist and as an executive with RCA Records have established an indelible place for him in the history of modern music; and

WHEREAS, This remarkable artist recorded more than seventy-five albums of guitar instrumentals and played on hundreds of hit records, including Elvis Presley's "Heartbreak Hotel," Hank William Sr.'s "Your Cheatin' Heart" and "Jambalaya," and The Everly Brothers "Wake up Little Susie"; and

WHEREAS, Chester Burton Atkins was born June 20, 1924 on a farm in Union County, a locale that also produced Country Music greats Roy Acuff and Carl Smith; Merle Travis provided inspiration for his early days of playing; his older brother, Jim Atkins, shared the family gift with the guitar, and played with Les Paul; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Atkins' first professional job was as a fiddler on WNOX in Knoxville, playing for singer, Bill Carlisle, and Archie Campbell; he worked the barn dances at Knoxville, Renfro Valley and Cincinnati, and subsequently worked at radio stations all over the country; and

WHEREAS, During the 1940s, Chet Atkins toured extensively with a variety of artists, including, Red Foley, The Carter Family, and Kitty Wells; in the mid 1950s, RCA Executive Steve Sholes hired him as a house guitarist for RCA recording sessions; and

WHEREAS, Chet Atkins began his distinguished executive career with RCA Records in 1957; during his nearly two decades there, he played a significant role in developing the careers of many notable musicians, including Roy Orbison, Jim Reeves, Charley Pride, Dolly Parton, Jerry Reed, Waylon Jennings, and Eddy Arnold; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Atkins was a modest and unassuming man who was devoted to his family; he was fortunate to enjoy the love and support of his wife of more than fifty years, Leona Johnson Atkins, and his daughter, Merle Atkins Russell; and

WHEREAS, The music industry has been indelibly shaped by Chet Atkins' singular impact upon it; his consummate artistry, finely honed musical skills, and enthusiasm have touched the lives of countless fellow performers and fans; and

WHEREAS, Joe Galante, Chairman of the RCA Label Group in Nashville, has said, "It's impossible to capsule his life due to the profound impact he's had as a wonderful human being and incredible member of our industry. His artistry and his influence as an industry leader have impacted so many. There is no way to replace him nor what he has meant to music and our Nashville community"; and

WHEREAS, It is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this remarkable artist and exceptional human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, That we hereby honor the memory of Chet Atkins, recognizing his lasting impact on music of all genres, express our admiration for his sterling character and indomitable spirit, and join all Tennesseans in expressing our appreciation for his outstanding contributions to the rich musical history of our state.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Atkins.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.