

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 7030  
By Cooper B

A RESOLUTION to recognize Tennessee artist George Hunt and to celebrate his art.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should specially recognize those talented citizens of this State whose creative abilities find outlet and expression through art; and

WHEREAS, one such highly talented and creative Tennessean is Memphis artist George Hunt, who, over the course of his career, has contributed to the arts and has helped guide and influence directions, trends, and aesthetic practices within Tennessee's artistic communities; and

WHEREAS, a nationally acclaimed artist, Mr. Hunt is renowned for his bold, dramatic, artistic style, which, when combined with his deeply rooted history in blues music, produces images that capture both the uniqueness of the individual and the essence of this colorful music; and

WHEREAS, ninety-nine percent of what Mr. Hunt paints comes from the Southern African-American experience, especially the folk tradition, the civil rights movement, the mythic heroism of Black manhood, and, of course, blues music and culture; and

WHEREAS, George Hunt's knowledge of blues music as well as the inspiration for his work comes from his life experience, which is steeped in the music, juke joints and back roads of the deep South, where his grandmother noted early in life that he had a special power to "see thangs"; and

WHEREAS, he has helped to shape the State's artistic legacy, as his work has been exhibited in both individual and group shows nationally, and is part of the permanent collections of museums, as well as private collectors such as Anthony Quinn and Eddie Murphy; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Hunt was born in rural Louisiana, spent his childhood in Texas and Arkansas, and attended college on a football scholarship at the University of Arkansas, where he was encouraged to study art as a career; he then taught art education and coached for three decades at George Washington Carver High School in Memphis before dedicating himself to painting full time; he now works in a studio overlooking world-famous Beale Street; and

WHEREAS, George Hunt's name and images have become synonymous with the Memphis in May Beale Street Music Festival; he has been selected each of the past ten years to paint an original blues image for the festival's posters, which sell out each year and have become valuable collector's items; and

WHEREAS, Famous Dave's Barbeque in Minneapolis and Chicago commissioned Mr. Hunt to produce twenty original paintings depicting a more contemporary vision of the blues, for which project he created images ranging from Stevie Ray Vaughan to the original Blues Brothers; this work led to a commission for the Isaac Hayes Club in Memphis, and another under development in Chicago; and

WHEREAS, in 1997, Mr. Hunt was commissioned to create an original painting commemorating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the "Little Rock Nine" at Central High School in Arkansas; the painting hung for four years in a conference room in the White House in Washington DC, prompting First Lady Hillary Clinton to write to Mr. Hunt, saying, "We are grateful that our visitors and staff have such a powerful image of hope and freedom to greet, inspire and inform them." This inspiring painting will soon be hung in a museum being built to showcase this pivotal civil rights act; and

WHEREAS, George Hunt's 1997 painting of the nine courageous students who became the first African Americans to attend Central High School in Little Rock, *America Cares*, was chosen to be the image on a 2005 United States postage stamp, part of a series commemorating the historic events of the Civil Rights movement; and

WHEREAS, he was selected as the featured artist for the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Museum's American Music Master's annual conference in 1998 and again in 2000; the 1998 conference, *Hellhound on My Trail: Robert Johnson and the Blues*, utilized a George Hunt

painting for its poster, and included a one-man show of his work at the 9<sup>th</sup> Street Gallery in Cleveland; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Hunt was commissioned to paint twenty-four portraits for the Blues and Legends Hall of Fame Museum in Robinsonville, Mississippi, for which he created the original painting for the large 28' x 40' mural on the exterior wall; the completion of this monumental work in 1998 represented to him both an honor and a dream come true; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly finds it appropriate to pause in its deliberations to acknowledge and applaud George Hunt for his dedication to the propagation of the arts in Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend George Hunt for his meritorious service to the state of Tennessee as an artist of singular talent and extend to him our best wishes for every future success.

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