

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 449

By Brown

A RESOLUTION to honor and celebrate the eighty-first annual Burge Family and Friends Reunion.

WHEREAS, the family is the basic building block that shapes our society, and the lives of family members, filled with work and play, love and laughter, illness and health, grief and disappointment, and success and achievement shape the course of our communities; and

WHEREAS, the history of our state and nation is woven from the countless threads of the histories of families, and these family chronicles are worthy of our appreciation; and

WHEREAS, the members of the Burge family will enjoy another reunion this year, as family members and guests gather together to celebrate their renowned history during the eighty-first annual Burge Family and Friends Reunion, to be held on June 8-10 at the Courtyard by Marriott Hotel, the first reunion to be held in Chattanooga since July of 1972; and

WHEREAS, hosting this year's event is Miss Marilyn Havis and Miss Constance Havis, the two daughters of Margaret Havis and the late Marion Havis; this Chattanooga family's connection to the Burge family tree is through the late Nancy Cokley Havis, the mother of Marion Havis; and

WHEREAS, this distinguished family traces its heritage to the Burge Plantation and to Lewis and Martha Burge, slaves who worked the Burge Plantation from the 1830s until emancipation after the Civil War. Lewis and Martha, who took the surname Maddox when they were freed, were owned with an additional thirty other slaves by Thomas Burge and, after his death, by his wife, Dolly Burge; and

WHEREAS, in 2007, Lewis and Martha Maddox's great-great-great-granddaughter, Antoinette McCann, organized the seventy-seventh annual celebration at the Burge Plantation, giving this remarkable family the opportunity to accomplish the legendary dream of Dr. Martin

Luther King, Jr., one where the descendants of slave masters and former slaves can sit down together at a table in brotherhood; and

WHEREAS, the Historic Burge Tour caught the interest of *National Geographic* which was filming a movie about the Civil War in Georgia; the magazine was impressed with the courage of the Burge family descendents, who ranged in age from seven months to eighty-three years, as they heroically united at the plantation, and also with their past, in peace and harmony, seeing for themselves where their family's strength took root; and

WHEREAS, inspired by the tour, *National Geographic* invited the members of this historic family to share their feelings after visiting the Burge Plantation for a documentary which will include these interviews, as well as the family's research, which is comprised of documents detailing where ancestors were purchased and census records dating back to 1850; and

WHEREAS, the genesis of the family reunion itself dates back to 1930, when Miles Burge invited his family over to partake in a special Sunday dinner and Jewell Burge, Miles Burge's daughter, cherished the family dinner so much that she suggested to her father they should hold another Sunday dinner the following year; and

WHEREAS, Miles Burge invited his brothers, John and Allen, along with John's family and Allen's wife, Marie, the next year; by the third year, news of the reunion traveled to other Burge siblings, including Mary, Lena, Henry, Willis, Nancy Ellar, Lessie, Annie, and Arthur. Ethridge Burge's wife, Willie, and Mary Burge's daughter, Rosa Bagby, suggested notifying all of the Burges and their families, and, as a result, the now historic event included a host of cousins, nieces, and nephews; and

WHEREAS, these old-fashioned outdoor picnics were originally held on the second Sunday of August each year until World War II, when the brave men from the Burge family took up arms to defend their country overseas; the reunion was brought back to life in 1947 by Willie Burge and Rosa Bagby, at which time this historic occasion began its celebration on the second Sunday in July; and

WHEREAS, the annual Burge Family and Friends Reunion is still held each year on the second Sunday in July in various cities where family members live, and also where they wish to

visit, including Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, Albuquerque, Orlando, Las Vegas, and New Orleans; and

WHEREAS, it is evident that the Burge family has deep and well established roots in the Volunteer State, and we take great pleasure in joining in their celebration of family pride; and

WHEREAS, the members of this legislative body are also pleased to recognize the many descendants of this strong and valiant family of our State as they gather to remember their triumphs and accomplishments, recall various historical events in their family, and exchange news of current events; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and welcome the eighty-first annual Burge Family Reunion, and wish these exceptional individuals all the best as they renew family connections and revisit their wonderful shared family history and memories.

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