

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 101

By Dickerson

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Frances Williams
Preston of Nashville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Frances Williams Preston of Nashville, one of the most successful and highly placed female music executives in the history of the entertainment industry; and

WHEREAS, from 1986 to 2004, she served as the president of Broadcast Music Inc. (BMI), the royalties company based in New York, having risen to the top of the industry to complete her extraordinary career with the performing rights entity that started in 1958; and

WHEREAS, a native daughter of Tennessee, born on August 27, 1928, and raised in Nashville, Frances Williams Preston was a graduate of North Central High School and attended George Peabody College for Teachers at Vanderbilt University; and

WHEREAS, landing her first job at National Life & Casualty Insurance Company in Nashville, Ms. Preston soon found herself as the receptionist for the company's WSM radio station where she caught the attention of Robert J. Burton, president of BMI who subsequently hired her to open a Nashville office for BMI in 1958; and

WHEREAS, the first performing rights entity with a full-time presence in the South, BMI's remarkable good fortune in hiring Ms. Preston would reverb for decades in the music industry to the benefit of countless songwriters and music fans as she became the guardian angel of songwriters; and

WHEREAS, Frances Preston worked with such renowned artists and songwriters as Kris Kristofferson, Dolly Parton, Willie Nelson, Roy Orbison, Loretta Lynn, Waylon Jennings, and Tammy Wynette; and

WHEREAS, recognized for her remarkable business savvy and her steadying grace, Frances Preston became the first woman corporate executive in Tennessee in 1964 when she

was named Vice President of BMI, going on to be appointed Senior Vice President, Performing Rights, in 1985; and

WHEREAS, a true music industry legend, she would spend forty-six years as the head of BMI's Nashville operation before being named President and Chief Executive Officer of BMI in 1986 and go on to oversee the company that represented such international recording acts as Paul Simon, Janet Jackson, and Sting until 2004; and

WHEREAS, a powerful voice for the music industry on Capitol Hill, Ms. Preston played a key role in the passage of the Copyright Amendments Act of 1992 and was called on to serve on the Panama Canal Study Committee and the White House Record Library during the Carter Administration and on the National Information Infrastructure Advisory Council for Vice President Al Gore during the Clinton Administration; and

WHEREAS, Frances Preston was an active humanitarian, working diligently hand in hand with a number of causes including the T.J. Martell Foundation for Leukemia, Cancer and AIDS Research where she served as president; and

WHEREAS, to specially recognize her many contributions and efforts as a humanitarian, the Frances Williams Preston Research Laboratories at Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center is named in her honor; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to awards and accolades, Frances Preston was the recipient in 1998 of a National Trustees Award, the highest recognition given by the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS) to a non-performer; and

WHEREAS, as a most appropriate tribute, the BMI Country Song of the Year Award was renamed the BMI Frances W. Preston Award in her honor; and

WHEREAS, named a Giant of Broadcasting honoree by the American Broadcasting Association, Frances Preston is a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame, the Broadcasting & Cable Hall of Fame, and the Gospel Music Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, the 1999 MIDEM's Person of the Year, she won the National Association of Broadcasters' Education Foundation Guardian Award in 2005 and Leadership Music's Dale Franklin Award in 2007; and

WHEREAS, her honors also include the President's Award from the National Music Publisher's Association, the President's Award from the Nashville Songwriters Association International, the Jo Walker-Meador Lifetime Achievement Award from SOURCE, and the Mentor Award from the Nashville Songwriters Foundation which was then renamed as the Frances Williams Preston Mentor Award; and

WHEREAS, Frances Preston is survived by her three sons, William Kirk Preston, David J. (Emily) Preston, and Donald L. Preston; her six grandchildren, Taylor Preston, Lindsey Preston, Jake Preston, Matthew Preston, Stuart Preston, and Frannie (Brent) Daughrity; and her great-granddaughter, Preston Rose Daughrity; and

WHEREAS, Frances Williams Preston leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all her chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, a true beloved daughter of Tennessee who took great pride in making her community and State a better place for all, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the extraordinary life of Frances Williams Preston; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Frances Williams Preston, reflecting fondly upon her resolute character, her unrivaled years of admirable service to generations of songwriters, and her stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Frances Williams Preston.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation to the family of Ms. Preston, with this final resolving clause omitted.