

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 790

By Beck

A RESOLUTION to recognize and honor the Grand Ole Opry on the celebration of its ninety-fifth anniversary.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly are proud to specially recognize a legendary institution that has contributed significantly to the country music industry and brought acclaim to the State of Tennessee the world over; and

WHEREAS, no mass media event is more associated with the State of Tennessee than the WSM radio program known as *The Grand Ole Opry*. Not only is *The Grand Ole Opry* the longest-running radio show in U.S. history, but it is renowned as the cornerstone for the dynamic commercial art form of country music; and

WHEREAS, the Grand Ole Opry and its offspring comprise, or are affiliated with, the State's major tourist attractions, and the Opry's commercial power and attraction have been the primary reasons for Nashville's emergence as a music recording center; and

WHEREAS, the saga of the Grand Ole Opry began on the night of November 28, 1925, when a young announcer on Nashville radio station WSM introduced an eighty-year-old fiddle player, Uncle Jimmy Thompson, as the first performer on a new show called *The WSM Barn Dance*; and

WHEREAS, announcer George D. Hay, who labeled himself "The Solemn Old Judge," but was neither old nor a judge, realized he had started a good thing that fateful night; and

WHEREAS, now, ninety-five years later, the radio show Mr. Hay started is still going strong; the Opry is the foundation for a huge entertainment and resort complex and has been instrumental in Nashville claiming the title of Music City U.S.A.; and

WHEREAS, this acclaimed radio show followed an NBC network radio program on Saturday nights called *The Music Appreciation Hour*; in 1928, Mr. Hay announced on the air,

"For the past hour we have been listening to music taken largely from the Grand Opera, but now we will present the Grand Ole Opry"; the name stuck and the rest is history; and

WHEREAS, crowds of people would come to the studio and stand in corridors to enjoy the Grand Ole Opry in person; WSM then decided to move the Opry to its own home, Studio C, wisely believing that the reactions of an enthusiastic audience of 500 fans would greatly enhance the program; and

WHEREAS, the crowds kept growing, and the Opry was forced to move again and again, first to the Hillsboro Theatre and then to the Dixie Tabernacle; and

WHEREAS, in July 1939, the War Memorial Auditorium in downtown Nashville became the Opry's new home; an admission fee of twenty-five cents was imposed to control the ever-growing crowds, but it failed to deter anyone from attending America's favorite radio program; and

WHEREAS, in 1943, the Grand Ole Opry began its three decades of residence at the Ryman Auditorium, which seated 2,300; during this time, the Opry expanded to include two shows on Saturday nights, as fans flocked to see the Gully Jumpers, the Fruit Jar Drinkers, and the Crook Brothers; and

WHEREAS, it was not until 1938 that singing claimed its rightful place alongside the instrumental music for which the Opry had become renowned; Roy Acuff and the Smoky Mountain Boys filled the Ryman with such classics as "The Wabash Cannonball" and "The Great Speckled Bird"; and

WHEREAS, in 1939, the NBC Radio Network began carrying a portion of the Opry as a network show; over the next decades, such outstanding entertainers as Bill Monroe, Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs, Ernest Tubb, Red Foley, Hank Williams, Porter Wagoner, Patsy Cline, Tammy Wynette, Hank Snow, Marty Robbins, Minnie Pearl, Ray Price, Grandpa Jones, George Morgan, and Kitty Wells became favorites across the nation; and

WHEREAS, in later years, the Grand Ole Opry saw the addition of country music legends Loretta Lynn, Bill Anderson, Dottie West, Connie Smith, Jack Greene, Jim Ed Brown, Charley Pride, and Dolly Parton; and

WHEREAS, while the Opry's popularity remained solid throughout the years, the Ryman Auditorium eventually deteriorated, thus bringing about another relocation; and

WHEREAS, the Grand Ole Opry said goodbye to the Ryman Auditorium in 1974, relocating to the new Grand Ole Opry House, where an eight-foot circle of hardwood that had been taken from the Ryman was placed at center stage; and

WHEREAS, the Grand Ole Opry House is a 4,400-seat auditorium that has become the centerpiece of the Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center complex, which also includes the Opryland Hotel, the General Jackson Showboat, the Gaylord Springs Golf Links, and the broadcast facilities of WSM-AM, in addition to the Ryman Auditorium and the Wildhorse Saloon in downtown Nashville as integral components of Ryman Hospitality Properties; and

WHEREAS, the musical magic of the Grand Ole Opry continues today as thousands of people make pilgrimages every year to see and hear the greatest acts in country music perform live, including such members of the Opry family as Trace Adkins, Dierks Bentley, Garth Brooks, Vince Gill, Emmylou Harris, Alan Jackson, Alison Krauss, Barbara Mandrell, Martina McBride, Brad Paisley, Jeannie Seely, Blake Shelton, Ricky Skaggs, Marty Stuart, Randy Travis, Carrie Underwood, Keith Urban, and Trisha Yearwood, to name just a few of the artists; and

WHEREAS, millions more tune in to Opry broadcasts via the Grand Ole Opry app, Sirius XM Satellite Radio, Nashville's 650 AM WSM, and the Opry and WSM 650 AM websites; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly finds it appropriate to pause in its deliberations to acknowledge and applaud the Grand Ole Opry and its remarkable members on the celebration of their ninety-fifth anniversary and commend them for their countless contributions to the music industry, to the city of Nashville, and to the State of Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby recognize and honor the legendary Grand Ole Opry and its many fine members, both past and present, as they celebrate the Opry's ninety-fifth anniversary.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to

the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.