

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1209

By Sexton J

A RESOLUTION relative to the Bible.

WHEREAS, the Bible has great historical and cultural significance in the State of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, according to family search organizations, many families traditionally record genealogies in their family Bible, and it is a good source of information about immediate family members and relatives, including names of parents, children, and spouses, as well as their dates of birth, marriage, and death; and

WHEREAS, according to the Secretary of State, Tennessee and many other states did not keep comprehensive records of births, marriages, and deaths prior to the twentieth century; and

WHEREAS, families recorded their own vital records in family Bibles that were passed down through generations; and

WHEREAS, many Bibles were donated to the Tennessee State Library and Archives, which holds hundreds of family Bible records in several formats and within many collections; and

WHEREAS, the Bible records featured in the Tennessee State Library and Archives were taken from photocopies in the Tennessee State Library and Archive's vertical files; additional records will be added as they are donated or discovered in manuscript collections, and the bulk of the records in this collection date between the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries; and

WHEREAS, many Tennessee families are represented by Bible records at the Tennessee State Library and Archives; and

WHEREAS, Secretary of State Tre Hargett is quoted as saying, "I am thrilled that the State Library and Archives and our volunteers have worked to make these resources accessible to all Tennesseans. The information recorded in TSLA's collection of Bible records is not only helpful for genealogy, but also a wonderful display of history at a very personal level"; and

WHEREAS, this book has been an inspiration to many of our national leaders, some of whom are from our great State; and

WHEREAS, according to the Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture, the African-American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, for which the State of Tennessee often provided a setting, also has strong ties to the Bible. One of the Civil Rights Movement's most prominent leaders, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., often framed his speeches around biblical tenets. On April 3, 1968, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his last speech, "I Have Been to the Mountain Top," at a Memphis church and included clear references to scripture to support his vision and the Civil Rights Movement as a whole; and

WHEREAS, other Tennessean Civil Rights leaders, such as James Morris Lawson, Jr., often advocated for such nonviolence in Bible study meetings; and

WHEREAS, Jennifer Gaunt's *Houston's Spiritual Journey* states that "The Bible has had a profound impact on many great Tennesseans. Former Governor Sam Houston was said to have often quoted the Bible in his speeches"; and

WHEREAS, *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature* illustrates that many Tennessean authors drew from the Bible in their writings, including Tennessee Williams, who used the Christian resurrecting phoenix symbol in his play; and

WHEREAS, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, the Bible is a strong driver of the economy in Tennessee, and printing the Bible is a multimillion-dollar industry for the State. As the religious printing and publishing capital of America, Nashville is known as the "buckle on the Bible Belt," and many top Bible publishers are headquartered in Nashville; and

WHEREAS, according to *The Economist*, over 100 million copies of the Bible are sold or given away every year. Annual Bible sales in America are worth between 425 million dollars and 650 million dollars. The Bible is available in 2,426 languages, which represents 95 percent of the world's population; and

WHEREAS, according to the Barna Group, an evangelical polling firm, 47 percent of Americans read the Bible every week. But other research has found that 91 percent of American households own at least one Bible, and the average household owns four Bibles, but Bible publishers manage to sell 25 million copies a year of a book that most people already have; and

WHEREAS, the Bible is part of the very fabric that weaves the quilt of the culture of Tennessee and our nation; and

WHEREAS, in 2015, the Barna Group found that Tennessee was the only state with two cities in the top five most Bible-minded cities in America, Chattanooga at number two and Tri-Cities at number three; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, the Barna Group found that Chattanooga was the number-one Bible-minded city in America; and

WHEREAS, the tulip poplar was chosen as the State tree because, according to the *Tennessee Blue Book*, "it grows from one end of the state to the other" and was "extensively used by the pioneers of the state" for practical purposes such as the construction of "houses, barns, and other necessary farm buildings," similar to how the Holy Bible is found in homes across the State and has been "used" for practical purposes such as recording family histories; and

WHEREAS, the State's "agricultural insect" is the honey-bee, which according to the *Tennessee Blue Book*, "plays a vital economic role in Tennessee," even as does the printing and distribution of the Holy Bible in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, the "passion flower" was chosen as the State wildflower, even though, according to the *Tennessee Blue Book*, its name came from "early Christian missionaries to South America, who saw in the various parts of the curiously constructed flower symbols of the Crucifixion – the three crosses, the crown of thorns, nails and chord"; and

WHEREAS, the "Coccinella 7," commonly called the ladybug or the ladybird beetle was chosen as a State insect, even though, according to the *Tennessee Blue Book*, "this beetle was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and called the 'Beetle of our Lady'"; and

WHEREAS, two state songs, "My Tennessee" and "Tennessee" refer to our State's natural beauty as having been "strewn" by "God's ... lavish hand," being a demonstration of "His wond'rous art," and evoking a "feeling it's all God's will"; and

WHEREAS, the state poem, "Oh Tennessee, My Tennessee," includes these words:

"Strong Folks of Pioneer Descent,

Simple, Honest, and Reverent"; 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 the Secretary of State shall include in the *Tennessee Blue Book* a section on the Bible in Tennessee, including the history of the Bible in this State, its economic impact in this State, and cultural uses of the Bible, including recording genealogical history. It is the intent of the General Assembly that a section on the Bible be included in the 2021-2022 publication of the *Tennessee Blue Book* and in each publication thereafter.