

SENATE RESOLUTION 31

By Lundberg

A RESOLUTION to recognize and honor Richard Christopher Leigh, accomplished songwriter.

WHEREAS, it is the privilege of the members of this body to recognize those citizens who are wholly devoted to their craft and enrich the lives of their fellow citizens through their art; and

WHEREAS, one such individual is Richard Christopher Leigh, a legendary songwriter who has topped the country charts and enjoyed a successful career that has spanned more than four decades; and

WHEREAS, born in Washington, D.C., on May 26, 1951, Mr. Leigh experienced a terrible tragedy in his early life; when he was two and a half years old, both of his parents were killed in a car accident. He was fostered by multiple family members until finally finding his home at age eight and a half with the ex-wife of his much older half-brother; she legally adopted him when he was fifteen; and

WHEREAS, after taking up guitar as a boy, he wrote his first song at age ten; he continued writing songs and performing them during his college career at Virginia Highlands Community College (VHCC) and Virginia Commonwealth University. He moved to Nashville in 1974 to pursue his music in earnest; and

WHEREAS, within only two years, Richard Leigh had his first No. 1 on the country charts with "I'll Get Over You," performed by Crystal Gayle; the next song he wrote for Ms. Gayle changed his life: the country and pop hit "Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue" not only topped the charts but won a Grammy award and Country Music Association award for Song of the Year and ultimately became one of the most-performed country songs of the twentieth century; and

WHEREAS, success came fast for Mr. Leigh, but it did not fizzle out in like fashion; in the four decades since, he has amassed fourteen top-ten hits and nine No. 1 singles, including "Somewhere In My Broken Heart," "Only Here For A Little While," and "The Greatest Man I Never Knew," performed by Reba McEntire and nominated for Best Country Song at the 1993 Grammy Awards; and

WHEREAS, over the years, he has penned songs for notable country artists Billy Dean, Mickey Gilley, Barbara Mandrell, Steve Wariner, Don Williams, Kathy Mattea, and the Dixie Chicks, who recorded Mr. Leigh's "Cold Day in July" for their album *Fly*, which reached No. 10 in the country music charts in 2000; and

WHEREAS, Richard Leigh has been nominated for songwriter of the year seven times, and in 1994, he was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Foundation Hall of Fame; on April 11, 2011, he was one of only four chosen nationally from the American Community College System to be awarded the 2011 Outstanding Alumni Award for excellence in one's chosen field, and on November 1, 2015, SESAC presented him with its Songwriter Legacy Award; and

WHEREAS, since 2013, Mr. Leigh has hosted the Richard Leigh Songwriters Festival at his alma mater VHCC; the festival features an annual competition for new songwriting talent, and proceeds from the event go to VHCC's Great Expectations program, which benefits foster care students; and

WHEREAS, the Richard Leigh Songwriters Festival is the culmination of a life of triumph and devotion; "I had four fathers and three mothers by the time I was fifteen," Mr. Leigh says. "It was kind of painful, and music was the way to vent that and get it out of my system, and it made me very happy." Through music, he found healing, purpose, and great success, and now he has found a way to give back to young people who have also experienced life in foster care; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that we pause to honor Richard Leigh, a songwriter and public servant of the highest order who has brought pride to his adopted home State of Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we hereby recognize and honor Richard Christopher Leigh for his many years of songwriting success and his passion for giving back to young people, extending our best wishes to him for continued success in all his future endeavors.

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