

SENATE RESOLUTION 7004 of the First Extraordinary Session

By Yager

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory and legacy of Dixie Lee of Harriman.

WHEREAS, Tennessee is proud to be the home of many supremely talented individuals whose creative accomplishments have enriched the lives of those around the world and brought pride to the Volunteer State; and

WHEREAS, one such individual was Dixie Lee, a gifted singer, dancer, and actress of Hollywood's Golden Age; and

WHEREAS, Dixie Lee was born Wilma Winifred Wyatt on November 4, 1909, in a modest wooden frame house located in the Walnut Hill section of Harriman; she would later adopt her stage name and claim 1911 as the year of her birth; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Lee was the youngest of three daughters born to East Tennessee natives Evan Wyatt and Nora Scarborough Wyatt, and she was the couple's only child to survive into adulthood, as both of her sisters succumbed to illness in their youth; and

WHEREAS, because of Evan Wyatt's work as an insurance agent, the family moved many times throughout Dixie Lee's childhood; in addition to living in Knoxville and Memphis, they spent time in Pennsylvania, Mississippi, and Louisiana, eventually relocating to Chicago, Illinois, where Ms. Lee attended Nicholas Senn High School; and

WHEREAS, in May 1928, Dixie Lee entered an amateur singing contest at the Sherman Hotel in downtown Chicago under the name Dixie Carroll; she won the contest, which was sponsored by singer and actress Ruth Etting, and was given a six-week contract to perform at the hotel; and

WHEREAS, the experience and success that she gained from performing at the Sherman Hotel led to her being offered a part in a Broadway play called *Good News!* and ultimately to her being discovered by Fox Film Corporation; and

WHEREAS, she joined Fox in 1929, at the young age of twenty, and the studio changed her name to Dixie Lee to avoid confusion with other actresses of the time who went by the surname Carroll; and

WHEREAS, Dixie Lee made her big screen debut in *Fox's Movietone Follies of 1929*; she went on to have major and minor roles in at least seventeen known films, mostly with Fox, with her most well-known film being *Love In Bloom*; and

WHEREAS, in 1930, Ms. Lee met and married a little known up-and-coming crooner by the name of Harry Lillis Crosby, Jr., or Bing Crosby, as he would later be known; together they had four sons: Gary, twins Phillip and Dennis, and Lindsay; and

WHEREAS, Dixie Lee retired from her acting career in 1935 to devote herself fully as a wife and mother; she came out of retirement in 1936 to record two hit songs with her husband, "The Way You Look Tonight" and "A Fine Romance"; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Lee's light was taken from this world too soon when, on November 1, 1952, three days before her forty-third birthday, she lost her battle with ovarian cancer; and

WHEREAS, throughout her life, Ms. Lee harbored an affinity for her home state; in a 1930 interview with the *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, she said, "Some day I am coming back to the beautiful hills and streams of Tennessee, which will always be home to me"; and

WHEREAS, over the years, Dixie Lee has been largely forgotten, appearing primarily as a footnote in her more famous husband's story; however, she was an entertainer of the highest caliber and most worthy of remembrance and reverence; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we honor the memory and legacy of singer, dancer, and Golden Age Hollywood actress Dixie Lee of Harriman.

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