

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 856

By Walley

A RESOLUTION to recognize Steve Sweat as the honorary State Historian of the late Sheriff Buford Pusser.

WHEREAS, over the past fifty years, Steve Sweat has emerged as the person most responsible for documenting the life and times of the legendary Buford Pusser, the three-term Sheriff of McNairy County who battled corruption and enforced the law at all costs; and

WHEREAS, as we mark the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Buford Pusser in 2024, we should reflect upon the parallel life of Steve Sweat, a native of McNairy County like the law enforcement icon with whom he has become so closely associated; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Sweat retains many vivid childhood memories of Buford Pusser, including the commencement of his law enforcement career in 1962, when he was appointed Chief of Police of Adamsville, and his election as Sheriff of McNairy County in 1964, thus becoming the youngest sheriff in Tennessee history at the age of twenty-six; and

WHEREAS, dismayed by the lawlessness and corruption rampant in his community, Buford Pusser raided and destroyed more than forty moonshine operations during his first year as McNairy County Sheriff; and

WHEREAS, Sheriff Buford Pusser often risked his life to uphold the law, so that the citizens of McNairy County could feel secure in their own homes; and

WHEREAS, as he came to realize Buford Pusser's positive impact in the community and worldwide, Mr. Sweat began to closely follow the sheriff's career, both in person and in the media, preserving first-hand stories and amassing a private collection of artifacts that documented his law enforcement legacy; and

WHEREAS, the American public soon learned about Buford Pusser's life of courage and integrity via the 1973 biopic *Walking Tall*, which told the sheriff's inspirational story in graphic detail; and

WHEREAS, Sheriff Pusser's crime-fighting legacy also inspired a book, a television series, a documentary, and three additional motion pictures, all of which depicted the great heroism of this legendary man who truly "walked tall"; and

WHEREAS, after Buford Pusser's death in 1974, Steve Sweat worked closely with the sheriff's daughter, Dwana, to arrange speaking engagements, interviews, and tours and assisted her in the drafting and publication of her biography *Walking On*; he was honored to speak at Ms. Pusser's funeral in 2018; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Sweat also served on the board that selected the national and local "Officers of the Year" for the Sheriff Buford Pusser Festival and was location supervisor on a promotional commercial for the *Walking Tall* DVD; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Sweat built a replica of the car used in the first *Walking Tall* movie and has used the car with great success in promoting McNairy County and Tennessee tourism for many years; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Sweat sponsored actor Bo Svenson, who portrayed Buford Pusser in the second and third *Walking Tall* movies, at a successful meet and greet event in McNairy County in 2022; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Sweat handled transportation for Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson when he visited McNairy County upon the release of the fourth *Walking Tall* movie, in which Mr. Johnson portrayed Buford Pusser; and

WHEREAS, Steve Sweat has been recognized by many states and counties with honorary deputy appointments for his lifelong work as the *de facto* Sheriff Buford Pusser historian, through which he has promoted honor and respect for law enforcement; and

WHEREAS, most recently, Mr. Sweat was involved in the 2023 Discovery Channel documentary *True Crime & Shine*, which tells the story of Sheriff Pusser's all-out war on corruption and crime along the Tennessee-Mississippi state line; and

WHEREAS, Steve Sweat has devoted much of his life to preserving and promoting the life, legend, and history of Sherriff Buford Pusser, and his selfless service should be rewarded by the State of Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we recognize Steve Sweat as the honorary State Historian of the late Sheriff Buford Pusser, fearless defender of law and order, and thank him for his ongoing commitment to preserving the history of a genuine American hero.

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.