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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2011

H O U S E R E S O L U T I O N

**PROCLAIMING JULY 25, 2011, AS “TOMMY BRENT DAY”
IN THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

Introduced By: Representative Donna M. Walsh

Date Introduced: June 23, 2011

Referred To: House read and passed

1 WHEREAS, Thomas Brent Cheseldine, known as “Tommy Brent” to his family and
2 many friends, was a highly respected and widely admired actor, press agent, director, and most
3 notably, for more than two decades, the producer and savior of the historic Theatre By The Sea in
4 Matunuck, Rhode Island; and

5 WHEREAS, Born in Washington, D.C., during the Great Depression, Mr. Brent would
6 skip class to attend vaudeville shows during his school years, thus beginning his eighty-year love
7 affair with the theatre; and

8 WHEREAS, Holding a panoply of odd jobs during his youth, Mr. Brent got his start in
9 the theatre at a barn in Arlington, Virginia. He was first introduced to Theatre By The Sea in the
10 late 1940s, while traveling as part of a team producing a documentary film about theatres in New
11 England, and in 1958, he became the Theatre’s press agent for one year; and

12 WHEREAS, By 1966, the owners of Theatre By The Sea had decided to demolish the
13 Theatre. With only hours to spare before the demolition began, Mr. Brent invested his own funds,
14 enlisted volunteer workers to help make necessary repairs, and enabled the Theatre to open for
15 the summer season in 1967; and

16 WHEREAS, Producing more than 100 musicals, plays, and children’s programs, Mr.
17 Brent acted as the producer and manager of the Theatre from 1967 to 1988. He was a mentor to
18 many an aspiring actor and actress and he inspired the public to become devoted patrons of his

1 beloved Theatre By The Sea; and

2 WHEREAS, In 1980, Theatre By The Sea was named to the National Register of Historic
3 Places and Tommy Brent had become such an integral part of the Matunuck community that the
4 South Kingstown Town Council declared “Tommy Brent Day” in his honor; and

5 WHEREAS, In 2007, the Theatre, following four years of inactivity and neglect, was ripe
6 for possible demolition. Once again to the rescue, Mr. Brent helped broker the sale of the Theatre
7 to its current owner and Mr. Brent’s longtime friend, Bill Hanney; and

8 WHEREAS, The most fitting tribute to Tommy Brent would be a celebration of his life, a
9 life in which each and every day was lived fully and joyfully embraced. In addition to the
10 Theatre, he enjoyed reading and his garden. Tommy Brent was a gifted artist and true gentleman
11 who contributed immeasurably to the fabric of our arts community and has left Rhode Island a far
12 better place because of his life’s endeavors; now, therefore be

13 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island and
14 Providence Plantations hereby proclaims July 25th of 2011 to be “Tommy Brent Day” in
15 celebration of his glorious life and myriad accomplishments; and be it further

16 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and he hereby is authorized and directed to
17 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to Martha Stamp.

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