

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 165

By Coley

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Donald "Duck" Dunn.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of legendary musician, Donald "Duck" Dunn of Memphis; and

WHEREAS, although he was much in demand as a session player and producer later in his career, Duck Dunn earned his greatest fame by providing the groove for an entire generation as the bassist for Booker T. & The MG's, the legendary Stax Records house band during Soulsville's hitmaking heyday in the 1960's and early 1970's; and

WHEREAS, a native of Memphis, Duck Dunn grew up and attended that city's Messick High School with future fellow MG, Steve Cropper; the two teenagers became enthralled with the rhythm & blues music scene of the black night clubs of West Memphis, and Duck taught himself to play bass by playing along with records; and

WHEREAS, Dunn, Cropper, and some friends began playing dates together as the Royal Spades, but soon changed the band's name to the Mar-Keys; under the latter name they scored a 1961 hit with an instrumental called "Last Night"; and

WHEREAS, after the Mar-Keys fizzled, Steve Cropper started working as a session guitarist and producer at Memphis's Stax Records, where he founded Booker T. & The MG's with Booker T. Jones in 1962; within a couple of years, his high school friend, Duck Dunn, joined him as a member of the band, and the rest is history; and

WHEREAS, many critics credit Booker T. & The MG's with being singularly responsible for the lasting value of not only Stax's recordings, but also Southern soul music as a whole; and

WHEREAS, the band's impeccable musicianship and tight grooves can be heard on dozens of classic Stax hits by Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett, Carla Thomas, Albert King, Sam & Dave, William Bell, Rufus Thomas, Eddie Floyd, Johnnie Taylor, and many others; and

WHEREAS, as originators of the unique Stax sound, Booker T. & The MG's were one of the most prolific, respected, and imitated groups of the era; John Lennon reportedly expressed a desire to write an instrumental for the group, and he did, in a way, when Booker T. & The MG's recorded an instrumental version of the Beatles' *Abbey Road* entitled *McLemore Avenue*; and

WHEREAS, the Stax sound was notable for its heavy bottom, and Duck Dunn's deep, moving basslines were an integral part of the sonic makeup; and

WHEREAS, his basslines on Otis Redding's "Respect" and "I Can't Turn You Loose," Sam & Dave's "Hold On, I'm Comin'," and Albert King's "Born Under A Bad Sign" have influenced musicians around the world; his work on the MG's *Melting Pot* album continues to inspire hip-hop artists today; and

WHEREAS, although they are best known for their seminal work as the backing band on some of the finest soul music recorded during the 1960's and 1970's, Booker T. & The MG's also recorded some truly great instrumental music of their own; and

WHEREAS, their biggest hit was 1961's "Green Onions," but Booker T. & The MG's really found their audience later in the decade with "Hip Hug-Her," "Groovin'," "Soul-Limbo," "Hang 'em High," and "Time Is Tight," all of which were Top 40 charting singles between 1967 and 1969; and

WHEREAS, MG's Booker T. Jones and Al Jackson were African-Americans, and thus the band played a groundbreaking role in changing the social landscape of popular music, which was mostly segregated in the 1960's; and

WHEREAS, Duck Dunn, Steve Cropper, Booker T. Jones, and Al Jackson set the standard for integrated bands and were hugely successful in the process, proving that black musicians and white musicians could make great music together; and

WHEREAS, the highlights of Duck Dunn's career are far too numerous to mention, but some are too impressive to leave unmentioned; and

WHEREAS, Booker T. & The MG's backed Otis Redding during his show-stealing performance at the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival; they were the house band for the thirtieth anniversary Bob Dylan tribute at Madison Square Garden in 1992; in 1993, they backed Neil

Young on a tour that earned critical accolades for both parties; and they played with several legendary guitarists as the house band at Eric Clapton's Crossroads Guitar Festival in 2004; and

WHEREAS, Booker T. & The MG's were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1992, and in 2007 they received a Lifetime Achievement Grammy; and

WHEREAS, after the band broke up in 1971, but before any of their subsequent reunions, Duck Dunn became a highly-sought-after session player and producer and was renowned for providing basslines and arrangements on the spot; he recorded with a wide variety of artists, including Muddy Waters, Freddie King, Isaac Hayes, Levon Helm, Neil Young, Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Eric Clapton, Tom Petty, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Guy Sebastian, Rod Stewart, Bob Dylan, Roy Buchanan, and Steely Dan, to name but a few; and

WHEREAS, perhaps his most visible role was as the bassist for Dan Ackroyd and John Belushi's backing band in the *Blues Brothers* movie and its sequel, *Blues Brothers 2000*; and

WHEREAS, a true musical warrior, Duck Dunn continued to perform and tour well into his sixties, including making occasional appearances with Booker T. & The MG's; and

WHEREAS, he has just completed a tour with his old friends Steve Cropper and Eddie Floyd when he departed this world at the age of seventy, dying in his sleep in Tokyo on the eve of his return home; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Dunn is survived by his wife, June; son, Jeff; and grandson, Michael; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should remember the bountiful life of this incredibly influential musician whose work is as fresh today as the day it was recorded; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Donald "Duck" Dunn, reflecting fondly upon his immense talent as a musician, composer, producer, and arranger and his enduring body of work as a member of Booker T. & The MG's.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Donald "Duck" Dunn.

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