

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 358

By Carr

A RESOLUTION to recognize and honor beloved Tennessean and cultural icon Dolly Parton for her contributions to children's literacy.

WHEREAS, Dolly Parton is one of Tennessee's most beloved and accomplished daughters, a supremely gifted and multi-talented writer, entertainer, and businesswoman whose compassionate spirit is at the heart of all she does and whose philanthropy has touched the lives of millions around the world; and

WHEREAS, born on January 19, 1946, on a farm in Sevier County, Ms. Parton is the fourth of Robert Lee and Avie Lee Parton's twelve children; what her family lacked in financial resources, they made up for with a wealth of love for one another and for music. By age ten, Dolly was performing on local television and radio shows in Knoxville; and

WHEREAS, Dolly Parton left for Nashville the day after her high school graduation in 1964; a mere three years later, country music superstar Porter Wagoner began featuring her on his popular syndicated television show, bringing her into the homes of over 45 million viewers in more than 100 markets and attracting the attention of RCA Records; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Parton went on to have fourteen top-ten hits with Porter, an auspicious start to her legendary career, which took off during the 1970s, when she was named the Country Music Association (CMA) Female Artist of the Year two years in a row and, in 1978, when she was honored as the CMA Entertainer of the Year, one of only six female artists ever to garner the title; and

WHEREAS, renowned the world over for her songwriting, Dolly Parton has penned many classics that have transcended genre, including "Jolene" and "Coat of Many Colors"; the singular "I Will Always Love You" made her the only person to earn a number one record three

times with the same song. In total, Dolly Parton has sold more than 100 million records worldwide; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of her many contributions to music over the years, Ms. Parton has received eight Grammy Awards, ten CMA awards, five Academy of Country Music Awards, and three American Music Awards; in 1999, she was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame, and in 2001, she became a member of the National Academy of Popular Music Songwriters Hall of Fame. She is also the recipient of the National Medal of Arts, the highest honor given by the United States government for excellence in the arts; and

WHEREAS, though she is loved the world over, Dolly Parton has never forgotten where she came from, and she continues to be a fierce force for good throughout Sevier County and the State of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, in 2003, she received the Partnership Award from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in connection with Dollywood's American Eagle Foundation bald eagle sanctuary; in 2017, she donated \$1 million to the Monroe Carell Jr. Vanderbilt Children's Hospital, and the following year, the Sevier County Senior Center was renamed the My People Senior Activity Center in her honor; and

WHEREAS, when a wildfire devastated more than 17,000 acres of the Smoky Mountain National Park in 2016—causing 14,000 residents and tourists to evacuate, damaging or destroying 2,400 buildings, injuring nearly 200 and killing fourteen, and displacing many whose homes were burned—Dolly Parton came to the aid of her neighbors without hesitation, starting the My People Fund, which gave \$13 million to 900 families to help rebuild their homes; and

WHEREAS, more recently, Ms. Parton has been a leading figure in the fight against COVID-19; in 2020, she gave \$1 million to help fund research into a cure for the virus at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, which ultimately helped lead to the successful development of the Moderna vaccine; and

WHEREAS, perhaps the brightest stars in her shining legacy of philanthropy are the Imagination Library program and her continued efforts to promote children's literacy and education; and

WHEREAS, in 1988, Dolly Parton formed the Dollywood Foundation, which originally launched with the sole purpose of helping decrease high school dropout rates in Sevier County; one of the program's first efforts was the Buddy Program, through which Ms. Parton gave five hundred dollars to every seventh and eighth grader who went on to finish high school, which effort decreased the dropout rate to just six percent; and

WHEREAS, since its founding, the Dollywood Foundation has expanded to include a variety of philanthropic and community efforts, including the flagship program, the Imagination Library, founded in 1995; and

WHEREAS, because of the Imagination Library, many know Dolly Parton as "the book lady," as the program provides a new, age-appropriate book each month to preschool children from birth to their fifth birthday; to date, the program has registered 1,788,176 young people and gifted a total of 152,366,795 books to young readers throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, a study of West Tennessee and rural Mississippi specifically showed that children who are participants of the program are better prepared for kindergarten and score significantly higher on reading comprehension and vocabulary assessments; and

WHEREAS, for five decades, Dolly Parton has brought joy and hope to all who love and admire her; she is an inspiration throughout the world, especially in her home of East Tennessee, to which she has remained devoted throughout her life; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Parton's ever-growing legacy is one that lands her firmly among the pantheon of country music greats, but beyond that, she is an exemplar most worthy of emulation—a shining example of the difference one person can make through hard work and compassionate action; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we recognize and honor Dolly Parton for her devoted and compassionate service to her fellow Tennesseans and millions around the world through her cultural contributions and philanthropy, extending our best wishes for continued success and happiness in all her 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 and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.