

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 752

By Sexton J

A RESOLUTION to designate the Holy Bible as the official State book.

WHEREAS, the practice of a legislative body approving and recommending the Bible to the American people dates back to September 12, 1782, when Congress passed a resolution approving and recommending the Aitken Bible, which was the first English Bible printed in North America, to "all inhabitants of the United States"; and

WHEREAS, this resolution, as documented in the Journals of Congress, has never been repealed; and

WHEREAS, the Holy Bible has great historical and cultural significance in the State of Tennessee as a record of the history of Tennessee families that predates some modern vital statistical records; and

WHEREAS, according to the Secretary of State, Tennessee and many other states did not keep comprehensive records of births, marriages, and deaths before the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and

WHEREAS, families recorded their own vital records in family Bibles that were passed down through the generations; and

WHEREAS, because these Bibles contain a history of Tennessee families that may not be found otherwise, the Tennessee State Library and Archives (TSLA) holds hundreds of family Bible records in several formats and within many collections; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee State Library and Archives Bible collection contains Bibles with records dated between the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, including those of many prominent Tennessee families; and

WHEREAS, Secretary of State Tre Hargett has said in connection with these Bible collections: "I am thrilled that the State Library and Archives and our volunteers have worked to

make these resources accessible to all Tennesseans. The information recorded in TSLA's collection of Bible records is not only helpful for genealogy, but also a wonderful display of history at a very personal level"; and

WHEREAS, printing the Bible is a multimillion-dollar industry for the State because many top Bible publishers are headquartered in Nashville, including Thomas Nelson, Gideons International, and United Methodist Publishing House; and

WHEREAS, in June of 2014, Thomas Nelson was purchased by a private investment firm for almost half a billion dollars; and

WHEREAS, even the *Los Angeles Times* has acknowledged the economic impact of the Bible in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, designating the Holy Bible as the official State book is in keeping with the religious connotations reflected in other State symbols and songs; and

WHEREAS, the tulip poplar was chosen as the State tree because, according to the *Blue Book*, "it grows from one end of the state to the other" and was "extensively used by the pioneers of the state" for practical purposes such as the construction of "houses, barns, and other necessary farm buildings," similar to how the Holy Bible is found in homes across the State and has been "used" for practical purposes such as recording family histories; and

WHEREAS, the State's agricultural insect is the honeybee, which, according to the *Blue Book*, "plays a vital economic role in Tennessee," as does the printing and distribution of the Holy Bible in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, the passion flower was chosen as the State wildflower, even though, according to the *Blue Book*, its name came from "early Christian missionaries to South America, who saw in the various parts of the curiously constructed flower symbols of the Crucifixion – the three crosses, the crown of thorns, nails and chord"; and

WHEREAS, the *Coccinella 7*, commonly called the ladybug or the ladybird beetle, was chosen as a State insect, even though, according to the *Blue Book*, "this beetle was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and called the 'Beetle of our Lady'"; and

WHEREAS, two State songs, "My Tennessee" and "Tennessee," refer to our State's natural beauty as having been "strewn" by "God's ... lavish hand," being a demonstration of "His wond'rous art" and evoking a "feeling it's all God's will"; and

WHEREAS, the State poem, "Oh Tennessee, My Tennessee," includes these words:

"Strong Folks of Pioneer Descent,

Simple, Honest, and Reverent"; 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 hereby designate the Holy Bible as the official State book.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Secretary of State is directed to list the Holy Bible as the official State book in the *Tennessee Blue Book*.

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