

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1232

By Faulkner

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of the late Chester Burton "Chet" Atkins of Union County for his extraordinary contributions to the world of country music.

WHEREAS, Tennessee has long been known throughout the world for its rich musical heritage; from the hills of East Tennessee through Music City U.S.A. to the shores of the Mississippi, the talented musicians of this State have earned a reputation that is unsurpassed in the history of American music; and

WHEREAS, the State of Tennessee takes great pride in the history and contributions of Union County and is grateful for the positive impact the county has had on the State's musical heritage; and

WHEREAS, one such eminent Union Countian was the late Chester Burton "Chet" Atkins, widely acclaimed as one of the preeminent guitarists of the past century; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Atkins was an extraordinarily gifted musician and a major positive factor in the country music industry for many years; his accomplishments as a guitarist and as an executive with RCA Records established an indelible place for him in the history of modern music; and

WHEREAS, this remarkable artist recorded more than seventy-five albums of guitar instrumentals and played on hundreds of hit records, including Elvis Presley's "Heartbreak Hotel," Hank William Sr.'s "Your Cheatin' Heart" and "Jambalaya," and The Everly Brothers "Wake up Little Susie"; and

WHEREAS, Chester Burton Atkins was born June 20, 1924, on a farm in Union County, a locale that also produced Country Music greats Roy Acuff and Carl Smith; Merle Travis

provided inspiration for his early days of playing; his older brother, Jim Atkins, shared the family gift with the guitar, and played with Les Paul; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Atkins's first professional job was as a fiddler on WNOX in Knoxville, playing for singers Bill Carlisle and Archie Campbell; he worked the barn dances at Knoxville, Renfro Valley and Cincinnati, and subsequently worked at radio stations all over the country; and

WHEREAS, during the 1940s, Chet Atkins toured extensively with a variety of artists, including Red Foley, The Carter Family, and Kitty Wells; in the mid 1950s, RCA Executive Steve Sholes hired him as a house guitarist for RCA recording sessions; and

WHEREAS, Chet Atkins began his distinguished executive career with RCA Records in 1957; during his nearly two decades there, he played a significant role in developing the careers of many notable musicians, including Roy Orbison, Jim Reeves, Charley Pride, Dolly Parton, Jerry Reed, Waylon Jennings, and Eddy Arnold; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Atkins was a modest and unassuming man who was devoted to his family; he was fortunate to enjoy the love and support of his wife of more than fifty years, Leona Johnson Atkins, and his daughter, Merle Atkins Russell; and

WHEREAS, the music industry has been indelibly shaped by Chet Atkins's singular impact upon it; his consummate artistry, finely honed musical skills, and enthusiasm have touched the lives of countless fellow performers and fans; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this remarkable artist and exceptional human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor the memory of Chet Atkins of Union County, recognizing his lasting impact on music of all genres, express our admiration for his sterling character and indomitable spirit, and join all Tennesseans in expressing our appreciation for his outstanding contributions to the rich musical history of our state.

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