

SENATE BILL 1983

By Stewart

AN ACT to name a segment of U.S. Highway 41A in Coffee County in honor of Robert L. "Bob" Couch, Jr. of Tullahoma.

WHEREAS, from time to time, the members of this General Assembly have seen fit to honor those exemplary citizens who have contributed significantly to the growth and prosperity of their respective communities; and

WHEREAS, no Tennessean is more deserving of this honor than Mr. Robert "Bob" L. Couch, Jr., a resident of Tullahoma since his birth in 1924; and

WHEREAS, Bob Couch was born on December 25, 1924, at home, 308 North Atlantic Street, Tullahoma, to Anabel and Laughlin Couch; and

WHEREAS, his sisters are Searcy Couch Hopkins and Dorothy "Dot" Couch Watson; and

WHEREAS, he represents the third generation to work in the same business, as he delivered groceries for his grandfather, W. J. Couch, who founded the family business in 1893; and

WHEREAS, Bob Couch was active in Boy Scouts and achieved the rank of Eagle Scout, one of the first young men in Tullahoma to do so; and

WHEREAS, he attended Tullahoma Public School (later South Jackson Street School) and Tullahoma High School, where he was the bass drummer in the first marching band; he transferred to Columbia Military Academy for his senior year and graduated in 1943; and

WHEREAS, Bob Couch enlisted in the U. S. Navy and served as a radar operator on the *USS Willis*, a destroyer escort ship; after serving at Great Lakes and Guam, he was discharged in 1946 at Jacksonville, Florida; and

WHEREAS, he attended Tulane University, where he joined the Sigma Chi fraternity; the University of Tennessee; and Middle Tennessee State College, where he received a degree in business and economics; he has been active in MTSU alumni affairs and enjoys supporting the Blue Raiders; and

WHEREAS, returning to Tullahoma, Bob Couch became a member of the American Legion Post 43 with which he has helped with Big Brothers projects, served as historian, chaplain, and commander, and chaired the Boys' State program for Tullahoma to which he was a delegate himself in 1942; he is also a member of the 40 & 8, Sons of the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and for over 50 years has been a Free and Accepted Mason in the York and Scottish Rites and a Shriner of Al Menah Temple; and

WHEREAS, in 1953, Mr. Robert "Bob" Couch, Jr. married Dorothy "Dot" Morton of Manchester, who has not only been his life partner, but a staunch supporter of all his activities and a participant in the family business since 1967; and

WHEREAS, Bob Couch joined the Tullahoma Rotary Club in which he has held several offices, including president; he has served as an Interact sponsor at THS, helped charter the Sunrise Rotary Club, and attends both clubs' meetings; he is a Paul Harris Fellow and has over 55 years of perfect attendance; and

WHEREAS, Bob Couch has been a lifelong member of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), where he has taught Sunday school, held many offices, and served as Elder; he was elected Elder Emeritus and has also served on the Board of Trustees of the Disciples Divinity House at Vanderbilt University and continues to support the programs of Bethany Hills Camp and Conference Center of the Christian Church in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, a lover of history, he was active in the Nathan Bedford Forrest Civil War Roundtable, a charter member of the Stone Fort Camp 72, and currently is a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans Camp 155 in Tullahoma; he is a recipient of the Military Cross Award from the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and one of his favorite pastimes has been sharing the history of the Tullahoma Campaign, the history of Camp Forrest, and Tullahoma; and

WHEREAS, having grown up with a camera in his hands, Bob Couch worked his way through college as school photographer and has made thousands of pictures of weddings, graduations, anniversaries, and dance recitals; for many years he filmed all the Wildcat football games and remains a big fan and season ticketholder, and he has also filmed local news for WLAC and WSMV television stations; and

WHEREAS, Bob Couch was one of the founding members of the Tullahoma Camera Club and taught photography classes at Motlow State Community College; he has also taught innumerable budding photographers over the counter at Couch's; and

WHEREAS, he has supported the arts as a member and an exhibitor at the Tullahoma Regional Fine Arts Center, and has been a member of the South Jackson Civic Center, and

WHEREAS, a volunteer with Hospice of the Highland Rim and Special Olympics, he received an award from the United Givers Fund in 1982; in 1991, Robert "Bob" Couch was named Veteran of the Year and received the Dr. Joe Nunley Award from fellow veterans at MTSU for service to others; he was one of the recipients of the Tullahoma Lifetime of Achievement and Community Service Award in 1995; in 1997, the Tullahoma Chamber of Commerce presented him with an Outstanding Sustaining Tullahoma Chamber Member Award, and most recently, in 2009, at the Annual Tullahoma Area Chamber of Commerce banquet, Mr. and Mrs. Couch received the Clyde Phillips Men's Store Business Award presented by Mr. Jim Phillips; and

WHEREAS, Mr. and Mrs. Robert "Bob" Couch were voted Mr. and Mrs. Tullahoma three times by Tullahoma citizens, and in 2000, the Couches were selected to be the Grand Marshals of the Tullahoma Area Chamber of Commerce Christmas Parade; and

WHEREAS, Robert "Bob" Couch is the father of Fran Couch and Candy Couch, father-in-law of Jon Gray, and grandfather of Jacob Gray; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Mayor and Aldermen of Tullahoma has petitioned this Body to name a segment of U.S. Highway 41A in their fair city and Coffee County to honor Mr. Couch and his bountiful life of purpose and commitment to the greater good; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly most heartily concurs with this excellent proposal and most appropriate tribute; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the segment of U.S. Highway 41A (North Jackson Street) from its intersection with William Northern Boulevard in the City of Tullahoma northward to the Coffee County - Moore County boundary is hereby designated the "Bob Couch Highway" in honor of Mr. Robert L. "Bob" Couch, Jr., an outstanding Tennessean who exemplifies the true spirit of the Volunteer State.

SECTION 2. The department of transportation is directed to erect suitable signs or to affix suitable markers designating the segment of U.S. Highway 41A described in Section 1 as the "Bob Couch Highway".

SECTION 3. The erection of such directional signs shall be within the guidelines prescribed by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

SECTION 4. This act shall become operative only if the federal highway administrator advises the commissioner of transportation in writing that the provisions of this act shall not render Tennessee in violation of federal laws and regulations and subject to penalties prescribed therein.

SECTION 5. This act shall become operative only if the City of Tullahoma remits the estimated cost of the erection of such signs to the Department of Transportation within one (1) year of the effective date of this act. The City of Tullahoma shall make payment of the estimated cost prior to any expenditure by the State for manufacture or installation of such signs. The Department shall return any unused portion of the estimated costs to the City of Tullahoma within thirty (30) days of the erection of such signs. If the actual cost exceeds the estimated cost, the City of Tullahoma shall remit an amount equal to the difference in such costs to the Department within thirty (30) days of receiving an itemized invoice of the actual cost from the Department.

SECTION 6. The appellation "Bob Couch Highway" provided for in this act is for honorary purposes only and nothing contained herein shall be construed as requiring the

alteration of any address, or the governmental system for assigning addresses, in any county, municipality or other governmental entity affected by this act.

SECTION 7. Nothing contained in this act shall be construed as requiring the alteration of any previously named segment or segments of any highway described in this act as the "Bob Couch Highway".

SECTION 8. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.