

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 15

By Campbell

A RESOLUTION urging President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., to honor beloved Tennessean and cultural icon Dolly Parton with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

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, she 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, 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, a woman of many talents, Dolly Parton has starred in hit films such as *Steel*, *Magnolias* and *9 to 5*, the latter for which she earned an Oscar nomination and two Grammy Awards for writing the title song; she has also appeared in various television movies and specials, and her production company, Sandollar Productions, has produced many well-known feature films; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Parton's business acumen and her devotion to East Tennessee resulted in the opening of her own theme park, Dollywood, at the base of the Great Smoky Mountains in 1986; since then, she has opened Dollywood's Splash Country and dinner attractions, Dolly Parton's Stampede and The Pirate's Voyage. Her entertainment businesses attract four million visitors annually and employ more than 3,000 individuals; and

WHEREAS, many know Dolly Parton as "the book lady" thanks to the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, a program that provides a new, age-appropriate book each month to preschool children from birth to their fifth birthday; to date, the program has gifted over 100 million books to children around the world; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, after wildfires destroyed thousands of acres in Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg, Dolly Parton stepped up to help her neighbors, as she and the Dollywood Foundation provided \$10,000 each to 900 families who had lost their homes. The Dollywood

Foundation subsequently received the 2018 Director's Community Leadership Award from the Knoxville Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in recognition of Ms. Parton's efforts to help her hometown rebuild after it was devastated by the worst natural disaster in State history; and

WHEREAS, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dolly Parton donated one million dollars to Vanderbilt University Medical Center to support its research toward the development of a vaccine, and in November 2020, Moderna Therapeutics, a Massachusetts-based biotechnology company, announced that its coronavirus vaccine has been shown to reduce infection by 94.5 percent and was made possible by the research at Vanderbilt and other medical institutions; 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; and

WHEREAS, the Presidential Medal of Freedom seeks to recognize those people who have made "an especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of the United States, or world peace, or cultural or other significant public or private endeavors," and Dolly Parton undoubtedly qualifies for such a prestigious honor; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we urge President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., to honor Dolly Parton with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that appropriate copies of this resolution be prepared and transmitted to each member of the Tennessee congressional delegation.