

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 339

By Gilmore

A RESOLUTION to congratulate and honor the Fisk Jubilee Singers upon winning a Grammy award.

WHEREAS, Tennessee is proud to be the home of various genres of music that are essential components of the American musical landscape; from Bristol, the birthplace of country music, to Memphis, the blues capital of the world, musicians across the State continue to inspire and influence others with their astounding artistry; and

WHEREAS, during the pre-telecast premiere ceremony of the 63rd Annual Grammy Awards, *Celebrating Fisk!* by the Fisk Jubilee Singers was named Best Roots Gospel Album, earning the vocal group its first Grammy in its 150-year history; and

WHEREAS, the Fisk Jubilee Singers are an African-American a cappella ensemble composed of students at Fisk University, a historically Black college in Nashville; the group was first organized in 1871 by the university's treasurer and music director, George L. White, a white Northern missionary dedicated to music and to proving that African Americans were the intellectual equals of whites; and

WHEREAS, with the initial goal of touring to raise funds for the financially distressed college, the first iteration of the Fisk Jubilee Singers included four Black men, Isaac Dickerson, Ben Holmes, Greene Evans, and Thomas Rutling, and five Black women, Ella Sheppard, Maggie Porter, Minnie Tate, Jennie Jackson, and Eliza Walker; and

WHEREAS, the original group toured along the Underground Railroad path in the United States and performed in England and elsewhere in Europe; the early repertoire consisted mostly of spirituals, including "Steal Away to Jesus" and "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot"; and

WHEREAS, as the group's founding predates the advent of commercial recording, the Fisk Jubilee Singers' 1909 recording of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" is the earliest known recording of the song and is currently housed at the Library of Congress; and

WHEREAS, *Celebrating Fisk!* marks the second nomination and first Grammy win for the a cappella group; the album draws its recordings from several concerts at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium in recent years and features guest artists Ruby Amanfu, Keb' Mo', Lee Ann Womack, The Fairfield Four, Rod McGaha, Derek Minor, Shannon Sanders, Rodney Atkins, Jimmy Hall, and CeCe Winans; and

WHEREAS, with this Grammy win, the Fisk Jubilee Singers are now members of the Grammy Hall of Fame, which comes in addition to previous inductions into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame and the Music City Walk of Fame; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the Grammy-winning *Celebrating Fisk!*, which serves as the 150th anniversary album, the group and its beloved director of nearly three decades, Dr. Paul Kwami, have a full "Year of Jubilee" planned—to include lectures, virtual reunions, and concerts—in celebration of the group's sesquicentennial year, which is officially marked on October 6, 2021; and

WHEREAS, on this auspicious occasion, it is most fitting that we honor the hard work, talent, and legacy of the Fisk Jubilee Singers; 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 congratulate and honor the Fisk Jubilee Singers upon their 2021 Grammy win, extending our best wishes for the esteemed and historic group's continued success.

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.