

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 499

By Johnson

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Keith Bilbrey on his induction into the Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly are proud to formally recognize those talented professionals whose influence on and participation in the broadcasting profession is of great import and whose talent has set them apart from their peers; and

WHEREAS, veteran radio broadcaster Keith Bilbrey is one such individual who has won acclaim for his years of excellence in the broadcast industry; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of the impact he has had on the genre of country music, Keith Bilbrey was inducted into the prestigious Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame on May 2, 2015, in Murfreesboro; and

WHEREAS, Keith Bilbrey was born in Cookeville on August 14, 1952, the youngest of Leo and Ethel Bilbrey's three children; and

WHEREAS, his fascination with radio began in the fourth grade, and he obtained his broadcasting license at the age of fourteen; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Bilbrey went to work for WHUB in Cookeville in 1968, marking the start of a long and illustrious career that led all the way to the hallowed stage of the *Grand Ole Opry*; and

WHEREAS, after moving to Nashville in 1974, Keith Bilbrey began working for WSM, first as a substitute announcer and later as a full-time disc jockey on WSM's FM and AM stations; throughout his career at WSM, he worked every single time slot and rose to become an iconic voice at the station; and

WHEREAS, in 1982, Mr. Bilbrey realized a lifelong ambition when he began announcing on the *Grand Ole Opry*, joining such legendary *Opry* announcers as George D. Hay, Ralph Emery, Hairl Hensley, and the dean of *Opry* announcers, Grant Turner; and

WHEREAS, Keith Bilbrey's affiliation with the *Opry* earned him additional opportunities in the world of country music television and radio, including his selection as the announcer for the *Ernest Tubb Midnight Jamboree*, a position he held until Ernest Tubb's death in 1984; and

WHEREAS, he became the first host of *Grand Ole Opry Live* in 1985, as well as the host of the *Opry* warm-up show and *Backstage Live* on *The Nashville Network* (TNN), positions he held until the format of the network was changed in 2000; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Bilbrey served as the announcer for the CBS telecast of the *Country Music Association (CMA) Awards* for three years and as the announcer of the *CMA 35th Anniversary Special*, and he continues to host the non-televised portion of the *CMA Awards* show; and

WHEREAS, in addition, he has also emceed for a variety of television specials, including the *TNN/Music City News Awards*, *An Evening of Country Music Greats*, *Honky-Tonkin at the Wildhorse*, and the *American Federation of Musicians 100th Anniversary Show*; and

WHEREAS, currently, Keith Bilbrey is the announcer and Larry Black's sidekick on one of RFD-TV's most popular programs, *Larry's Country Diner*, and co-hosts *Nashville Country Cookin'* alongside his wife, Emy Joe; he is also the announcer on *Music City Roots*, a live weekly radio and television show, the *Roots Radio Hour* on *Hippie Radio*, and hosts the syndicated radio show, *Classic Country Today*, which is heard on approximately 175 stations nationwide; and

WHEREAS, an accomplished member of his profession and a respected leader in his community, Mr. Bilbrey is a Tennessean of whom all Tennesseans can be proud, and it is highly appropriate that the members of this General Assembly should recognize such an esteemed broadcasting legend; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and congratulate Keith Bilbrey upon his induction into the Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame and pay tribute to his many years of broadcasting excellence and service to the good people of Tennessee.

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