

HOUSE BILL 1828

By Bulso

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4,
Chapter 1, Part 3, relative to official state books.

WHEREAS, the Tennessee Blue Book catalogs Tennessee's State Songs, State Poems, and State Paintings, yet despite her rich history as the birthplace of figures of enormous political, literary, and cultural significance, Tennessee has not designated any works, fact or fiction, as official state books; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of the works that helped shape Tennessee, and of the works that Tennessee's sons and daughters have written that have helped to shape a nation, the General Assembly finds it appropriate to designate a list of official state books; and

WHEREAS, on June 1, 1796, Congress approved the admission of Tennessee as the sixteenth state of the union; and

WHEREAS, on September 19, 1796, just three months later, George Washington's farewell address to the people of the United States was published in the *Philadelphia Daily American Advertiser* and then in other papers across the country; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the importance and continued vitality of Washington's farewell address, the United States Senate has, since 1893, read the address aloud each year on February 22, the day of Washington's birth; and

WHEREAS, in his farewell address, George Washington noted, among other things, "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports." Washington continued, "In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens...."; and

WHEREAS, in 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville published the first volume of his monumental work, *Democracy in America*. The publication followed de Tocqueville's visit to Nashville, Tennessee, and other parts of the United States in 1831; and

WHEREAS, in *Democracy in America*, de Tocqueville explains why George Washington was correct when he described religion and morality as the "indispensable supports" of our political prosperity. Indeed, de Tocqueville wrote that religion "should be considered the first" of America's "political institutions"; and

WHEREAS, on September 12, 1782, the Congress of the United States approved the printing of the first American Bible (Journals of Congress, Sept. 18, 1782). When the American Revolution began, America stopped trade with Britain, cutting off our country's supply of bibles and causing the printer for the Journals of Congress, Robert Aitken, to publish the first American Bible, also known as the "Aitken Bible"; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee is home of the largest publisher of authentic reproductions of the Aitken Bible: The Aitken Bible Historical Foundation. Tennessee is also home to three of the five privately owned original first American Bibles remaining in the world today; and

WHEREAS, Andrew Jackson became the seventh President of the United States, winning landslide elections in 1828 and 1832. President Jackson is one of the most important and influential figures in American History; and

WHEREAS, the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, supported by grants from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Tennessee Historical Commission, and the Watson-Brown Foundation has collected and published in twelve volumes *The Papers of Andrew Jackson*, a project to collect and publish Andrew Jackson's entire extant literary works; and

WHEREAS, *The Papers of Andrew Jackson* represents a remarkable achievement, chronicling the life and writings of one of Tennessee's most storied figures; and

WHEREAS, many Pulitzer Prize-winning authors have called Tennessee home; and

WHEREAS, *Roots* by Alex Haley, written when the author lived in Henning, Tennessee, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1977. It is the most successful book ever penned by a Tennessean and one largely responsible for reviving popular interest in family history; and

WHEREAS, *A Death in the Family* by James Agee, written when the author lived in Knoxville, Tennessee, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1958 posthumously. The autobiographical novel provides a portrait of life in Knoxville, showing how the death of a father in a car crash affects the surviving family members; and

WHEREAS, *All the King's Men* by Robert Penn Warren, written when the author lived in Clarksville, Tennessee, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1947. The novel tells the story of charismatic populist governor Willie Stark and his political machinations in the Depression-era South; and

WHEREAS, *American Lion*, a biography of Andrew Jackson by Jon Meacham, written when the author lived in Chattanooga, Tennessee, won the Pulitzer Prize in 2009; and

WHEREAS, *The Civil War: A Narrative* by Shelby Foote, written when the author lived in Memphis, Tennessee, is a three-volume history of the American Civil War and received national recognition by appearing on Ken Burns' PBS documentary, *The Civil War*, in 1990; and

WHEREAS, *Coat of Many Colors* by Dolly Parton is a children's book that highlights the author's early childhood in the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee; now, therefore,

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

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4, Chapter 1, Part 3, is amended by adding the following new section:

(a) The following are designated as the official state books:

(1) *Farewell Address to the American People*, George Washington (1796);

(2) *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville (1835 and 1840);

(3) Aitken Bible, Journals of Congress (1782);

(4) *The Papers of Andrew Jackson*, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Tennessee, Knoxville;

(5) *Roots*, Alex Haley (1977);

(6) *A Death in the Family*, James Agee (1958);

(7) *All the King's Men*, Robert Penn Warren (1947);

(8) *American Lion*, Jon Meacham (2009);

(9) *The Civil War: A Narrative*, Shelby Foote (1958-1974); and

(10) *Coat of Many Colors*, Dolly Parton (2016).

(b) The secretary of state shall list the foregoing as the official state books in the Tennessee Blue Book.

SECTION 2. This act takes effect July 1, 2024, the public welfare requiring it.