

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 695

By Shepard

A RESOLUTION to honor the professional achievements of musician John Rich.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this body should pause to honor those exemplary citizens who contribute significantly to the reputation of Tennessee throughout the world as the center of the music industry universe and home of the most generous and compassionate citizenry by helping to reinforce the “Volunteer State” nickname; and

WHEREAS, one such citizen is John Rich who has garnered high acclaim as a singer, songwriter, record producer, and television personality over the course of his illustrious and storied career in the music and entertainment industry; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rich, born on January 7, 1974, in Amarillo, Texas, moved to middle Tennessee in the early 1990s, where he attended and graduated from Dickson County Senior High School with the class of 1992, making lifelong friends and ties with the community; and

WHEREAS, after high school, Mr. Rich chose to forego college to pursue his dream of becoming a country music recording artist. In the summer of 1992, he was chosen by executives at Opryland USA to be a performer in the Nashville-based theme park’s daily variety show entitled “Country Music USA,” wherein Mr. Rich performed songs by country music superstars such as George Jones, Garth Brooks, George Strait, and Vince Gill; and

WHEREAS, during his time at Opryland USA, Mr. Rich met fellow performer Dean Sams, who along with Mr. Rich and two other fellow Texans formed a band named Texassee. The band traveled across the country playing more than five hundred shows in 1993 and 1994 before landing the gig as the house band for the grand opening of the Wildhorse Saloon in downtown Nashville; and

WHEREAS, thanks in large part to the nightly exposure and high energy performances at the Wildhorse Saloon, Texassee landed a recording contract in 1996 with BNA Nashville and the band became known as Lonestar, releasing a self-titled album that same year which included top-ten hit “Tequila Talkin” and number one hit “No News”; and

WHEREAS, after two albums, two number one hits, several top-ten hits, and five years with Lonestar, Mr. Rich left the band in 1998 to pursue a solo career with BNA Nashville and focus on his growing talents as a songwriter with publisher Sony/Tree; and

WHEREAS, after limited success as a solo artist, Mr. Rich met Big Kenny Alphin, former lead singer for the rock band luvjOi and, in 2002, the two formed an alliance known as the MuzikMafia, which began holding regular Tuesday night performances at The Pub of Love in downtown Nashville; and

WHEREAS, the MuzikMafia (Musically Artistic Friends in Alliance) grew rapidly in popularity with founding members and performers including Gretchen Wilson, Cowboy Troy, James Otto, Shane Nicholson, Shannon Lawson, and others; and

WHEREAS, through their performances with the MuzikMafia and successes as a songwriting team, Mr. Rich and Mr. Alphin were invited by Paul Worley of Warner Bros. Records to record an album together as a duo, Big & Rich, after which they released their first album, *Horse of a Different Color*, in 2004, which included the smash hit “Save a Horse (Ride A Cowboy)”; and

WHEREAS, Big & Rich went on to release two more albums, “*Comin’ to Your Town*” (2005) and “*Raising Hell and Amazing Grace*” (2006), which produced ten singles on the country music charts, most notably the number one hit “Lost in this Moment”; and

WHEREAS, during the success of Big & Rich, the duo also had tremendous songwriting success with singles by artists such as Jason Aldean (“Amarillo Sky,” “Hicktown,” “Johnny Cash”), Keith Anderson (“Pickin’ Wildflowers”), Wynonna Judd (“Attitude,” “Rescue Me”), and Faith Hill (“Mississippi Girl,” “Like We Never Loved at All,” “Sunshine and Summertime”); and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rich has also experienced tremendous success as a record producer, producing or co-producing albums for Big & Rich, Gretchen Wilson, Cowboy Troy, Shannon Brown, John Anderson, Randy Owen, The Jane Dear Girls, and Brantley Gilbert; and

WHEREAS, in 2009, Mr. Rich released his second solo album, entitled *Son of a Preacher Man*, which produced three singles, including the anthem “Shuttin’ Detroit Down,” written as a response to the economic hardships imposed on the automotive industry workers as a result of the financial collapse of General Motors and Chrysler and the ensuing bailouts. The album also included a tribute to his grandfather, who fought in World War II, called “The Good Lord and The Man”; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rich became intimately involved in the presidential campaign of 2008, serving as Honorary Chairman for the ill-fated campaign of Tennessee’s native son, Fred Thompson, and later that same year wrote, recorded, and released a campaign song in support of Arizona Senator John McCain’s campaign for President entitled “Raisin’ McCain”; and

WHEREAS in 2007, Mr. Rich began showcasing his talents in the world of television, hosting the inaugural season of the CMT reality show *Gone Country*, and served as the host for two subsequent seasons. In 2008, he also served as a judge on NBC’s *Nashville Star* talent contest; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rich’s most notable television role to date was as a contestant on the exceedingly popular 2011 season of *Celebrity Apprentice*, wherein he competed to raise money for the charity of his choice, St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital in Memphis; and

WHEREAS, as a competitor on the *Celebrity Apprentice*, Mr. Rich broke records on two different episodes for fundraising on his way to winning the title of Celebrity Apprentice, defeating television and movie star Marlee Matlin, and raising more than 1.5 million dollars for St. Jude’s; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his political fundraising and philanthropic efforts with St. Jude’s, Mr. Rich has been very active and supportive of Second Harvest Food Bank, Vanderbilt Children’s Hospital, and numerous other local charities, including hosting a fundraiser at his home in October 2011, and making his own cash donation of twenty thousand dollars to support efforts to establish a YMCA in Dickson County, where he had established roots as a high school teenager; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rich had the tremendous good fortune to marry Ms. Joan Bush on December 6, 2008, and the couple have two sons, Cash, aged two, and Colt, aged four months; and

WHEREAS, throughout his impressive career and despite his innumerable successes, John Rich has always kept an unwavering priority on those closest to him, including his father, Jim Rich; his grandfather, Pap; his grandmother, affectionately known as Granny Rich; his siblings, Isaac, Joy, and Jamie; and high school friends, Marcus Peters, Kyle Steranka, and Jody Barrett; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that we recognize and honor the character and accomplishments of this fine Tennessean who has excelled as a musician and as a television performer, but especially we should acknowledge his dedication and philanthropy toward St. Jude's Children's Hospital, Vanderbilt Children's Hospital, Second Harvest Food Bank, the YMCA of Dickson County, and other worthy charities; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend John Rich for his amazing musical talents and his many contributions to country music as well as to his community at large. We extend to him our best wishes for much continued success in all future endeavors.

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