

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 915

By Capley

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of country music legend
Toby Keith.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of country music legend Toby Keith; and

WHEREAS, a revered icon of the genre, Mr. Keith enjoyed a thirty-one-year career in country music, during which time he topped the charts and reached the very pinnacle of success; and

WHEREAS, born Toby Keith Covell on July 8, 1961, in Clinton, Oklahoma, Toby Keith first became interested in music after listening to musicians play at Billie Garner's Supper Club, located in Fort Smith, Arkansas, and owned by his grandmother, whom he visited during the summers of his youth; he began playing with the band there and got his first guitar when he was eight years old; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from high school in Moore, Oklahoma, he worked as a derrick hand in the oil fields, becoming operation manager; when he was twenty, he formed the Easy Money Band with friends, playing local bars while maintaining his oil-industry day job; and

WHEREAS, he continued playing with his band after joining the semi-pro Oklahoma City Drillers football team, ultimately putting his focus on music and playing the honky-tonk circuit in Oklahoma and Texas; and

WHEREAS, Toby Keith moved to Nashville in the early 1990s, and after Mercury Records executive Harold Shedd heard his demo, he was asked to perform live for Mr. Shedd and was signed to a recording contract with Mercury; his debut single, "Should've Been a Cowboy," went to No. 1 on the *Billboard* Hot Country Songs chart in 1993, reached No. 93 on

the Hot 100 chart, and received more than three million radio spins by the end of the decade, making it the most-played country song of the 1990s; and

WHEREAS, he would go on to release nineteen studio albums, two Christmas albums, and five compilation albums, totaling worldwide album sales of over forty million; he charted sixty-one singles on the *Billboard* Hot Country Songs chart, including twenty number one hits and twenty-two additional Top 10 hits, with his longest-lasting number one hits being "Beer for My Horses," which was a 2003 duet with Willie Nelson, and 2005's "As Good as I Once Was," at six weeks each; and

WHEREAS, for his many contributions to country music, Toby Keith was awarded an honorary degree from Villanova University, the National Medal of Arts by President Donald Trump in 2021, and the inaugural Country Icon Award at the People's Choice Country Awards in 2023; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his exceptional career in music, Toby Keith was an actor, entrepreneur, and philanthropist; he made his acting debut in 2006, starring in the film *Broken Bridges*, and he co-starred with comedian Rodney Carrington in the 2008 film *Beer for My Horses*, inspired by his song of the same name; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Keith founded Show Dog Nashville, a label that eventually merged with Universal South Records to become Show Dog-Universal Music; in 2005, he opened Toby Keith's I Love This Bar & Grill in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, eventually expanding to have locations in more than ten states, and he established a line of clothing, TK Steelman, in 2009; and

WHEREAS, his philanthropic endeavors included supporting Ally's House, a nonprofit in Oklahoma that benefits children with cancer, and Little Kids Rock, a national nonprofit that works to restore and revitalize music education in disadvantaged public schools; and

WHEREAS, above all, he was wholly devoted to his family, especially his wife of nearly forty years, Tricia Lucus, and their three children; and

WHEREAS, Toby Keith's legacy will live on through his songs, which will forever remain part of the country music canon and the fabric of American music; and

WHEREAS, it is most fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional artist and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Toby Keith, reflecting on his indelible contributions to country music and his dedication to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family, friends, and many fans of Mr. Keith.

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.