

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 937

By Beck

A RESOLUTION to recognize and honor Jeannie Seely on her fifty-fifth anniversary as a member of the Grand Ole Opry.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly are pleased to recognize those artists who devote themselves to their craft, thereby enriching and enlivening the lives of others; and

WHEREAS, Jeannie Seely is one such individual, a legendary country performing artist and songwriter who is this year celebrating her fifty-fifth anniversary as a member of the Grand Ole Opry; and

WHEREAS, growing up on a farm outside of Townville, Pennsylvania, Ms. Seely was a precocious talent who went from singing with her mother every Saturday morning while the two baked bread together to performing on local radio by age eleven and appearing on local television by age sixteen; and

WHEREAS, when she was barely tall enough to reach the dial on her family's Philco console radio, Jeannie Seely was tuning in to the Grand Ole Opry on WSM 650; as a teenager, she would sit in her family's car eating popcorn and listening to the Grand Ole Opry while her parents played cards with friends; and

WHEREAS, after a stint in California, Ms. Seely moved to Nashville with only fifty dollars and a Ford Falcon to her name; however, within a month, Porter Wagoner hired her as the female singer for his road and television series; and

WHEREAS, Jeannie Seely was initially turned down by every record label in town; her big break came when a recording contract was offered by Monument Records. She recorded

her legendary song "Don't Touch Me" soon after, and it debuted on the country music charts, where it stayed for over five months; and

WHEREAS, it was for "Don't Touch Me" that Ms. Seely was honored with the 1966 Grammy Award for Best Country Vocal Performance by a Female, edging out the likes of Loretta Lynn and Dottie West to become the third female country artist to receive the coveted award; and

WHEREAS, today, "Don't Touch Me" is considered a standard in country music; Ms. Seely's recording of the song is ranked No. 97 in the book *Heartaches By the Number: Country Music's 500 Greatest Singles* and included in the book *The Stories Behind Country Music's All-Time Greatest 100 Songs*; several notable artists across genres have gone on to record the song, including Tammy Wynette, George Jones, and Etta James; and

WHEREAS, after the success of her debut single, Jeannie Seely began singing and touring with Jack Greene; the two would become one of the most successful duos and road shows in country music history, doing much to promote country music to wider audiences around the world; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Seely has penned songs for other artists over the years, including Merle Haggard, Ray Price, Ernest Tubb, and Lorrie Morgan; rhythm and blues artist Irma Thomas scored a national pop hit with Jeannie Seely's song "Anyone Who Knows What Love Is"; and

WHEREAS, her career is still going strong; in 2018, she joined Willie Nelson's SiriusXM channel, Willie's Roadhouse, with her four-hour weekly show, *Sunday's with Seely*; that same year, she was honored by the Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp with star number 82 on the Music City Walk of Fame; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Seely was also duly honored by Lincoln Memorial University on December 14, 2021, with an honorary doctor of arts degree; and

WHEREAS, in 2020, Jeannie Seely released *An American Classic*, a thirteen-track album that features a duet with Willie Nelson, "Not a Dry Eye in the House," a new recording of her Grammy-winning signature song "Don't Touch Me," a duet with Ray Stevens on the Paul McCartney-penned "Dance Tonight," and the Celtic-flavored "Peaceful Waters," written by Don Cusic, who produced the album; and

WHEREAS, in addition to her success in the music industry, Ms. Seely is quite an accomplished actress; she has appeared in several major stage productions, including *Always*, *Patsy Cline* and *The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas*; she also appeared in Willie Nelson's movie *Honeysuckle Rose* and sang on the film's platinum-selling soundtrack; and

WHEREAS, on September 16, 1967, Jeannie Seely saw her childhood dream come true when she became a member of the Grand Ole Opry; the only Pennsylvania native to be invited to become a member, she was also the first female to regularly host Opry segments and is the only female to regularly appear as a headlining artist on the annual Grand Ole Opry cruise; and

WHEREAS, aptly known as "Miss Country Soul" for her deeply moving vocals, Ms. Seely has graced the stages of the historic Ryman Auditorium and the Grand Ole Opry House for five and a half decades now, and it is most fitting that she be recognized on this special occasion; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and recognize Jeannie Seely on her illustrious career in country music and congratulate her on her fifty-fifth anniversary as a member of the Grand Ole Opry.

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.