

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1165

By Sparks

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Veronica Loretta "Roni" Stoneman of Nashville.

WHEREAS, we were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Veronica Loretta "Roni" Stoneman of Nashville; and

WHEREAS, Roni Stoneman was an exemplary musician and a pioneer in bluegrass and country music, and her numerous titles of "The First Lady of Banjo," "Queen of the Banjo," and "Star of Stage, Screen, TV and Truck-Stops" reflect her immense impact on the entertainment industry; and

WHEREAS, born in Washington, D.C., on May 5, 1938, to Ernest "Pop" Stoneman and Hattie Stoneman, Roni Stoneman was the second youngest of twenty-three children; her start in music came from playing her brother Scotty's banjo until her father made her one of her own, and she grew to become an unrivaled talent on nearly any stringed instrument; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Stoneman began her professional singing career at age nine, performing with the Stoneman Family band at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C.; the group surged in popularity during the folk music movement of the 1950s and 1960s, earning the band a television show, *The Stoneman Family Show*, and recording contracts; and

WHEREAS, after Pop Stoneman's death in 1968, the family continued playing for many years, and in 2021, the Stoneman Family band was inducted into The Bluegrass Hall of Fame in Raleigh, North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, in 1957, Ms. Stoneman quickly gained a following as the first woman recorded playing three-finger style on the five-string banjo during the song "Lonesome Road Blues"; several years later, in 1971, she left the Stoneman Family band to pursue her own career; and

WHEREAS, working in Printer's Alley, Ms. Stoneman signed on with the talent agency Buddy Lee Attractions and was soon cast on *Hee Haw* as Ida Lee Nagger and other various characters; she acted on the show from 1973 to 1990, offering up both comedy and musical talent during a time when it was uncommon for women to be recognized in these roles; and

WHEREAS, she also acted on *The Merlin Gene Show* as Merlin's wife, Hattie Mae, and was a featured artist for over twenty-six episodes; and

WHEREAS, she spent her later years in her hometown of Nashville, performing comedy and music at the Nashville Palace, John A's, and the Texas Troubadour; and

WHEREAS, outside of her career, Ms. Stoneman often spent time volunteering with and participating in numerous organizations, raising money for The Family Center in Murfreesboro, working with Nashville's Cowboy Church, and acting as host for the *Midnite Jamboree*; and

WHEREAS, her lifetime membership of the Reunion of Professional Entertainers (R.O.P.E.) culminated in her receiving the Musician of the Year award in 2014 and the Entertainer of the Year award in 2022; a biography of her life, *Pressing On*, was published in 2007 detailing more about her life and career; and

WHEREAS, Roni Stoneman is survived by her sister, Donna Stoneman; her children, Eugene (Angela) Cox, Rebecca Fisher, Barbara Cox, Robert Cox, and Georgia Hemrick (Craig Core); her grandchildren, Lucas Cox, Dustin Cox, Matthew Cox, Stephen Benton, Michael Benton, and Virginia Bolden; ten great-grandchildren; and a host of extended family and friends; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Stoneman leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all her chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that we should remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant, musician, 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 Veronica Loretta "Roni" Stoneman, reflecting fondly upon her impeccable character and her stalwart commitment 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 of Ms. Stoneman.

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.