

SENATE RESOLUTION 168

By Beavers

A RESOLUTION to honor and recognize Coleman Walker.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly pause to specially recognize those dedicated individuals who have relentlessly pursued their dreams and built careers that contribute greatly to the history of their respective communities; and

WHEREAS, one such committed individual is Coleman Walker of Lebanon, a radio talk show host and owner of Walker Phillips Insurance, which represents AFLAC Insurance among other companies; and

WHEREAS, the son of Sam and Nellie Walker, Coleman Walker was born in Smith County but moved to Lebanon as a baby when electricity first became prevalent in the region; his father had a career wiring houses and moved to begin a job with Middle Tennessee Electric; and

WHEREAS, when the Russians launched Sputnik in 1957, Mr. Walker's father encouraged him to study engineering, so he attended Tennessee Tech University but cut his studies short when engineering failed to interest him; and

WHEREAS, with engineering set aside, Coleman Walker could not suppress his lifelong dream of being on the radio, particularly working as a disc jockey spinning records; and

WHEREAS, a door to Mr. Walker's dream was unlocked on February 12, 1961, on his mother's birthday; his father was reading the electric meter at WCOR Radio when he saw a friend who told him of the station's plans to hold auditions the following day in search of a new employee; and

WHEREAS, that door swung wide open when Sam Walker relayed the news to his son, who went to the audition and was hired to spin records on Saturday afternoons; the station soon gave him additional hours on Sunday mornings; and

WHEREAS, WCOR soon began transmitting with an FM signal as well; from that point on, Coleman Walker worked at the station forty hours each week on the air; and

WHEREAS, in 1963, he married a charming young lady named Helen Ashworth, who he had met on a blind date with a mutual friend; taking on the financial responsibility that accompanies marriage, Coleman Walker realized that his radio station job did not pay enough to serve as his only means of income; and

WHEREAS, the same year the Walkers were married, WHIN Radio in Gallatin offered Mr. Walker a job; he tentatively accepted the job and informed WCOR owner, Jack Henderickson, of his plans to accept the new position; and

WHEREAS, not wanting to let go of such a talented and popular radio host, Mr. Henderickson offered to allow Mr. Walker to take on extra work at the station, selling advertising time, writing commercials, and performing the commercials himself; and

WHEREAS, in the mid 1960s, Mr. Walker moved into the morning slot and started doing the Birthday Club; in the 1970s, he was regularly signing on at 5:30 in the mornings, hosting the Birthday Club, working until nine a.m. and then going out and selling air time; and

WHEREAS, when WCOR sold its FM station and began only broadcasting on the AM frequency, the station faced a difficult time because so many people were listening predominantly to FM stations; and

WHEREAS, working long hours and missing time with his family, Mr. Walker began working with his uncle, Dan Norton, in the insurance business in 1986, which allowed him to spend more time at home; the two worked together for several years, and Rich Thorn connected Mr. Walker with AFLAC; and

WHEREAS, while handling his insurance accounts, Coleman Walker continued to work at the station until 1989, a point at which he had reached complete burnout in the radio business; and

WHEREAS, just two years later, WCOR went off the air, but Susie Bay Jones (now James) managed to salvage the building, clear the AM license, and secure a new FM license; she put the two back on the air in simulcast on October 1, 1993, as WANT Radio; and

WHEREAS, despite his initial burnout, Mr. Walker accepted an offer from Ms. Jones to come back on the air; since 1993, he has been juggling the radio position with his insurance job, beginning his mornings with his radio show, Coleman and Company, from 7 until 8 a.m., then going to work at his insurance job for the remainder of the day; and

WHEREAS, a man of many talents with a history of working tirelessly in pursuit of his career aspirations, Coleman Walker has managed to succeed in both careers, contributing greatly to the community by bringing people together on his show, and, in the afternoons, by lending his insurance savvy to members of the same community; and

WHEREAS, when given the rare pleasure of spare time, Mr. Walker says he enjoys gardening, fishing, golfing, and taking tropical family trips; he is an avid Cincinnati Reds fan, as his station carried their games for many years; and

WHEREAS, active in his community outside of his two careers, Mr. Walker has served as secretary of the Lebanon Lion's Club since 1993 and also gives of his time and many talents as a promotional volunteer with Sherry's Run, Relay for Life, and other fundraisers; and

WHEREAS, Coleman Walker's many professional, personal, and civic achievements aside, he is exceedingly thankful for the love and companionship he shares with his wife, Helen Walker, and he is the proud father of three sons, Clark, Brian, and Mike; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Walker is deeply admired by his six grandchildren, the oldest of whom is nineteen years old; and

WHEREAS, though he does not yet know when he will retire, Coleman Walker says he plans to go off the air commemorating his mother's birthday, on February 12, the same day he first tried his voice in the broadcasting world; however, he has yet to decide in which year he will wrap up his career; and

WHEREAS, Coleman Walker is a Tennessean of the highest caliber who has worked assiduously to provide an informative and entertaining radio show for the citizens of Lebanon; Mr. Walker has successfully balanced two careers, always making time for his family and for his

community, and he should be specially recognized for his many years of dedicated work; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we hereby honor and recognize Coleman Walker for his successful career as a radio talk show host and an insurance company owner, extend to him our sincerest gratitude for bettering the City of Lebanon and the State of Tennessee, and wish him the very best in all his 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.