Chapter No. 2243
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SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION No. 672

Originated in Senate _____ Secretary

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 672

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION MOURNING THE PASSING OF LEGENDARY MISSISSIPPI BLUESMAN WILLIE "PINETOP" PERKINS.

WHEREAS, Willie "Pinetop" Perkins, legendary Mississippi bluesman and self-taught keyboardist for Muddy Waters, passed away on March 21, 2011, in Austin, Texas; and

WHEREAS, fellow great bluesman B.B. King was saddened by the loss of his friend. "He was one of the last great Mississippi Bluesmen. He had such a distinctive voice, and he sure could play the piano. He will be missed not only by me, but by lovers of music all over the world," King said; and

WHEREAS, Pinetop Perkins began playing blues in the late 1920s, and is widely regarded as one of the best - and certainly most enduring - blues pianists. He has forged a style that has influenced three generations of piano players, and continues to be the yardstick by which great blues pianists are measured; and

WHEREAS, born Willie Perkins in Belzoni, Mississippi, in 1913, Pinetop started out playing guitar and piano at house parties and honky-tonks, but dropped the guitar in the 1940s after sustaining a serious injury in his left arm. He worked primarily in the Mississippi Delta throughout the 1930s and 1940s, spending 3 years with Sonny Boy Williamson on the King Biscuit Time Radio Show on KFFA in Helena, Arkansas. Pinetop also toured extensively with slide guitar player Robert Nighthawk and backed him on an early Chess session. After briefly working with B.B. King in Memphis, Perkins barnstormed the South with Earl Hooker during the early 1950s. The pair completed a session for Sam Phillips' famous Sun Records in 1953. It was at this session that he

recorded his version of "Pinetop's Boogie Woogie," a song originally written and recorded by pianist Clarence "Pinetop" Smith - the influential blues pianist. Although referred to as "Pinetop" when he played on King Biscuit in the 1940s, it was his sensational version of this song that secured his lifelong nickname; and

WHEREAS, although he enjoyed success as a solo artist since the 1980s, Pinetop was known for holding down the piano chair in the great Muddy Waters Band for 12 years during the pinnacle of Muddy's career. Replacing Otis Spann in 1969, Pinetop helped shape the Waters sound and anchored Muddy's memorable combo throughout the 1970s with his brilliant piano solos. In 1980, Pinetop and other members of Muddy's crew struck out on their own and formed the Legendary Blues Band; and

WHEREAS, after being labeled a sideman for most of his career, Pinetop eventually left the Legendary Blues Band to concentrate on solo work. Within 2 years, he had cut his first domestic record as a frontman and pursued an ambitious tour schedule. He was featured on several nationally syndicated news and music programs, and appeared in numerous movie productions and TV and radio ads. He also headlined nearly every major showcase room in North America and most of the major festivals around the world; and

WHEREAS, the great irony of Pinetop's career is that he did not blossom as a headliner until his eighth decade - a phenomenon that resulted in the release of 15 solo records in 15 years, beginning in 1992. "Born in the Delta" and "Legends" were both nominated for GRAMMY Awards - in 1997 and 2000, respectively. This was followed by a 2005 GRAMMY nomination for "Ladies Man." That same year, he was also presented with a lifetime achievement award at the GRAMMYs; and

WHEREAS, aside from his well-deserved GRAMMY recognition, Pinetop also received a National Heritage Fellowship in 2000 from

the National Endowment of the Arts. He has been featured in the documentary "Piano Blues", directed by Clint Eastwood for the Martin Scorsese PBS series "The Blues." He continued to win the Blues Music Award for best blues piano every year until 2003, when he retired from the event and the award was renamed the Pinetop Perkins Piano Player of the Year Award. In 2007, still on the road in his 94th year, Pinetop Perkins' unique life was chronicled in Peter Carlson's biographical documentary DVD, "Born In The Honey"; and

WHEREAS, Perkins won a Grammy in February for best traditional blues album for "Joined at the Hip; Pinetop Perkins and Willie 'Big Eyes' Smith." That win made Perkins the oldest Grammy winner, edging out late comedian George Burns (who was 95); and

WHEREAS, it is with sadness and nostalgia that we note the passing of this distinctive Mississippi Bluesman whose music brought joy to the world and honor to the State of Mississippi:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That we do hereby mourn the passing of legendary Mississippi Bluesman Willie "Pinetop" Perkins, and extend the sympathy of the Legislature to his surviving family on his passing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to the surviving family of Pinetop Perkins, forwarded to the Mississippi Arts Commission and made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

ADOPTED BY THE SENATE
March 23, 2011

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
March 25, 2011

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES