

By: Senator Irvin

SENATE RESOLUTION

HONORING JIMMY DRIFTWOOD FOR HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO
FOLK MUSIC AND TO THE STATE OF ARKANSAS.

Subtitle

HONORING JIMMY DRIFTWOOD FOR HIS
CONTRIBUTIONS TO FOLK MUSIC AND TO THE
STATE OF ARKANSAS.

WHEREAS, Mr. Jimmy Driftwood was born James Corbitt Morris in Timbo, Arkansas, on June 20, 1907, and died on July 12, 1998, in Fayetteville, Arkansas; and was a prolific folk singer and songwriter, along with his father, Neil Morris; and

WHEREAS, Jimmy Driftwood wrote over 6,000 folk songs, and is most famous for "The Battle of New Orleans" and "Tennessee Stud"; and learned to play guitar on his grandfather's homemade instrument, which he used throughout his career, noting that the neck was made from fence rail, the sides from an old ox yoke, and the head and bottom from the headboard of his grandmother's bed; and

WHEREAS, Jimmy Driftwood received a degree in education from Arkansas State Teacher's College, now the University of Central Arkansas, married Clede Johnson in 1936, and began writing poetry and music; enjoyed his teaching career in Arkansas and began a family; wrote songs during his teaching career to help teach his students history in an entertaining manner; and wrote his famous "The Battle of New Orleans" in 1936 to help his class become interested in the event; and



WHEREAS, it was not until the 1950s that he changed his name to Jimmy Driftwood and began pursuing a musical career; and recorded his first album, "Newly Discovered Early American Folk Songs" in 1957, an album that was highly praised by critics; and

WHEREAS, Jimmy Driftwood moved to Nashville, Tennessee, and became popular through his appearances on the Grand Ole Opry; and his musical career reached its height in 1959, when he had 6 songs on popular and country music charts, including a recording of "The Battle of New Orleans" by singer Johnny Horton that won the 1960 Grammy Award for Song of the Year; and

WHEREAS, during his recording career, Jimmy Driftwood also won Grammy Awards for "Wilderness Road", "Songs of Billy Yank and Johnny Reb", and "Tennessee Stud"; and he had songs recorded by Eddy Arnold, Johnny Cash, Hawkshaw Hawkins, Homer and Jethro, Odetta, Doc Watson, and many others; and

WHEREAS, Jimmy Driftwood returned to Arkansas around 1963, where he became a folklorist, establishing the Rackensack Folklore Society and promoting local folk singers and musicians by creating the Arkansas Folk Festival; helped establish the Ozark Folk Center to preserve Ozark Mountain culture; worked to defeat the United States Army Corps of Engineers' plan to dam the Buffalo River, which resulted in the establishment of the Buffalo National River; had a major role in preserving Blanchard Springs Caverns; was appointed to direct the Arkansas Parks and Tourism Commission for his efforts; was named to the Advisory Committee of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts; and served as a musicologist for the National Geographic Society,

NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

THAT the Senate recognizes and honors the rich legacy of Jimmy Driftwood and his contributions to Arkansas and to American folk culture.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT upon adoption of this resolution, an appropriate

copy shall be provided to the family of Mr. Driftwood by the Secretary of the Senate.