

SECOND REGULAR SESSION

House Concurrent Resolution No. 27

97TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVES MAY (Sponsor), BUTLER, PETERS, LAFAYER, ROORDA,
MORGAN, KIRKTON, NICHOLS, PIERSON, PACE, SMITH, MIMS, RUNIONS, CARPENTER,
SWEARINGEN, ELLINGTON AND MCCANN BEATTY (Co-sponsors).

5744L.011

WHEREAS, the contributions of composer, musician, and publisher W.C. Handy helped
shape African-American folk music into what would be called "The Blues"; and

WHEREAS, W.C. Handy, the "Father of the Blues", was born in Alabama, the son of
former slaves. His first instrument was the cornet, and he advanced from lessons in a barbershop
quartet to studying classical music; and

WHEREAS, at age twenty, W.C. Handy organized a quartet to play at the 1893 Chicago
World's Fair, a gathering that attracted other musical luminaries of the time, notably ragtime
pianist Scott Joplin; and

WHEREAS, when the fair was postponed for a year, W.C. Handy headed for St. Louis
where the quartet was soon forced to disband because the country was experiencing an economy
in panic; and

WHEREAS, the St. Louis days would imprint themselves on W.C. Handy's mind and
music. Surrounded by misery and opulence alike, the young black man suffered from hunger and
lice, slept in a vacant lot, slumped in a poolroom chair, in a horse's stall, and on the cobblestones
of the levee of the Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, as he related in his autobiography "Father of the Blues", his inner voice said
repeatedly, "Your father was right. Your place is in ministry" and his old schoolteacher's words
rang through his head, "What can music do but bring you to the gutter?"; and

WHEREAS, W.C. Handy never gave in. He continued to eke out a living playing his
cornet and later noted that these down-and-out days would lead to the birth of the "St. Louis
Blues"; and

WHEREAS, published 100 years ago in 1914, the "St. Louis Blues" had phenomenal
sales success, garnering worldwide acclaim and entering the repertoire of blues diva Bessie
Smith; and

33 **WHEREAS**, in 1958, only months after W.C. Handy's death, his life story played on the
34 silver screen in theaters across the country in the film "St. Louis Blues", with starred singer Nat
35 King Cole as the legendary composer; and

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37 **WHEREAS**, W.C. Handy's other songs include "The Memphis Blues", "Beale Street
38 Blues", "Aunt Hagar's Blues", and "Yellow Dog Blues"; and

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40 **WHEREAS**, W.C. Handy's legacy continues to shine in the annals of music, with his
41 songs continually reinterpreted in idioms of blues, jazz, pop, and classical music; and

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43 **WHEREAS**, today, the W.C. Handy Award is a prestigious prize reserved for blues
44 musicians; and

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46 **WHEREAS**, the composer of more than 80 hymns, marches, and blues tunes, W.C.
47 Handy did more to carry the blues into the mainstream of music than any other man; and

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49 **WHEREAS**, his contribution is a legacy that has exerted a profound and lasting
50 influence on music; and

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52 **WHEREAS**, a larger than life bronze of W.C. Handy has been commissioned for
53 placement in front of the National Blues Museum in downtown St. Louis; and

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55 **WHEREAS**, in the fall of 2014, the documentary "Mr. Handy's Blues", produced by
56 Emmy-winning producer Joanne Fish, will premiere in St. Louis to coincide with the unveiling
57 of the Handy statue:

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59 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the members of the House of
60 Representatives of the Ninety-seventh General Assembly, Second Regular Session, the Senate
61 concurring therein, hereby recognize the week of September 7 to September 13, 2014, as "W.C.
62 Handy Week" in honor of the legendary "Father of the Blues" and writer of the song "St. Louis
63 Blues"; and

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65 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Chief Clerk of the Missouri House of
66 Representatives be instructed to prepare a properly inscribed copy of this resolution for the W.C.
67 Handy Memorial Foundation.

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