

1 State of Arkansas  
2 91st General Assembly  
3 Regular Session, 2017

SR 13

4  
5 By: Senator Irvin

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7 **SENATE RESOLUTION**

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

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12 **Subtitle**

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

16  
17 WHEREAS, Mr. Jimmy Driftwood was born James Corbitt Morris in Timbo,  
18 Arkansas, on June 20, 1907, and died on July 12, 1998, in Fayetteville,  
19 Arkansas; and was a prolific folk singer and songwriter, along with his  
20 father, Neil Morris; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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29 NOW THEREFORE,

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

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

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

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

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