

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 685

Honoring Hiram “Hank” Williams on the 100th anniversary of his birth.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 14, 2023

Mr. GREEN of Tennessee (for himself, Mr. ZINKE, Mr. OGLES, Mr. ROSE, Mr. MOORE of Alabama, Mr. DOGGETT, Mr. WEBER of Texas, Mr. GRIFFITH, and Mr. ROY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

RESOLUTION

Honoring Hiram “Hank” Williams on the 100th anniversary
of his birth.

Whereas Hiram “Hank” Williams is widely regarded as the most influential American singer and songwriter of the 20th century;

Whereas Williams was born in Mount Olive, Alabama, to Lon and Lillie Williams on September 17, 1923, and later moved to Nashville, Tennessee, to pursue the American dream;

Whereas Williams only learned to play basic guitar chords from his aunt and by listening to music that was played at dances, in churches, and on the radio;

Whereas Williams met Rufus “Tee Tot” Payne, a Black street musician, at the age of 8 years old on the streets

of Georgiana, Alabama, with Mr. Payne teaching the young Hank blues chords and barre chords, which would later become part of Williams signature sound;

Whereas Williams began his career at a young age, playing his \$3.50 “git-tar” on the street for any who would listen, and ended his career having played to sold-out crowds at the Grand Ole Opry and on stages across America and on military bases in Europe;

Whereas, in 1946, Williams landed a songwriting contract with Acuff-Rose Publications and began composing material for singer Molly O’Day;

Whereas, in 1946, Williams received his first recording contract with Sterling Records;

Whereas Williams started his early career as a radio singer and became a regular on the newly created Louisiana Hayride radio program based in Shreveport, Louisiana;

Whereas Williams wrote most of his songs himself, and crafted direct, emotionally honest lyrics with a poetic simplicity that spoke not only to fans of country and western music but to a much broader audience;

Whereas Williams made a name for himself by creating a plaintive, bluesy phrasing that was unique and ultimately became a touchstone of country music;

Whereas Williams’ inability to read and notate music did not inhibit his compositions, and instead he sang in the “language of the everyman”, as noted by the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame;

Whereas Williams’ common tongue and easygoing music earned him the nickname “Hillbilly Shakespeare”;

Whereas Williams often authored and sung many gospel songs and recorded many moral narrations under the pseudonym “Luke the Drifter”;

Whereas Williams recorded 55 singles that made the top 10 of the Billboard Country and Western Best Sellers chart, including 12 that reached number 1, 3 of which were after his death;

Whereas Williams authored iconic American hits such as 1947’s “Move It On Over”, 1949’s “I’m so Lonesome I Could Cry”, 1951’s “Hey, Good Lookin’” and “Ramblin’ Man”, and 1953’s “Your Cheatin’ Heart”;

Whereas Williams made music history by releasing other famous hits such as 1949’s “Lost Highway” and “Lovesick Blues”, 1951’s “Cold, Cold Heart”, and 1952’s “Jambalaya”;

Whereas Williams most famous gospel song was his 1948 release of “I Saw the Light”, ushering in a genre-defining piece of work that set the stage for gospel music for generations to come;

Whereas the Country Music Hall of Fame noted that Williams “set the agenda for contemporary country songcraft” and the “standard by which success is measured in country music”;

Whereas Williams was posthumously inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1961, the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1970, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1987, and the Native American Music Awards Hall of Fame in 1999, and earned a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame;

Whereas, in 2010, Williams was posthumously awarded a Pulitzer Prize Special Citation for his work, honoring his

“craftsmanship as a songwriter who expressed universal feelings with poignant simplicity and played a pivotal role in transforming country music into a major musical and cultural force in American life”;

Whereas Williams’ many achievements spanned only a few years before his untimely death at the young age of 29;

Whereas, in 2011, “The Lost Notebooks of Hank Williams” album was released, featuring songs sung by various contemporary country artists paying tribute to Williams, completing and performing the unfinished songs left in Williams’ multiple notebooks, which he always had with him while alive to capture his spontaneous ideas;

Whereas Williams’ legacy still lives on in country music and rock and roll, inspiring generations of singers and songwriters, such as his son, Hank Williams, Jr.; and

Whereas American music and culture owe much to Hank Williams: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) recognizes the amazing life and legacy of
3 Hank Williams on the 100th anniversary of his
4 birth;

5 (2) recognizes his generation-defining influence
6 on the field of country music; and

7 (3) hereby thanks Hank Williams for his con-
8 tributions to American music and culture.

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