SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 568

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING AND CONGRATULATING THE USA INTERNATIONAL BALLET COMPETITION UPON ITS RECEIPT OF THE 2003 GOVERNOR'S EXCELLENCE IN THE ARTS AWARD IN THE CATEGORY OF ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENT IN DANCE.

WHEREAS, the USA International Ballet Competition in Jackson, Mississippi, (the first International Ballet Competition in the United States and the Western Hemisphere) is the recipient of the 2003 Governor's Excellence in the Arts Award in the Category of Artistic Achievement in Dance; and

WHEREAS, the first International Ballet Competition (IBC) premiered in Varna, Bulgaria, in 1964. In 1975, Jackson Ballet Artistic Director Thalia Mara introduced city leaders to the idea of ballet competitions and convinced them to secure the USA International Ballet Competition for the City of Jackson; and

WHEREAS, in 1978, Mississippi Ballet International was incorporated to produce the first International Ballet Competition in the United States and the Western Hemisphere. Robert Joffrey, renowned artistic Director of the Joffrey Ballet, agreed to chair the first international panel of jurors. In June 1979, the first USA International Ballet Competition was held in Jackson, Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, success was partly due to the city's gracious hospitality and to the addition of unique features not offered at other competitions. Each participant was assigned a volunteer host family. Competitors were invited to stay at no expense after elimination, and an international dance school with a faculty of master teachers was held as a companion event. The Jackson
competition also required each country to have only one jury representative; and

WHEREAS, Jackson audiences have had the thrill of watching young medallists at the start of their careers to go on from the IBC to achieve international stardom. For example, this year Jose Manuel Carreno, the Grad Prix winner in Jackson's 1990 competition, starred with three other leading dancers from American Ballet Theatre on PBS's "Great Performances"; and

WHEREAS, in 1980, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's International Theatre Institute Dance Committee granted official sanction to the USA International Ballet Competition, placing Jackson alongside sister competitions in Varna, Moscow and Tokyo. In 1982, the United States Congress passed a Joint Resolution designating Jackson, Mississippi, as the official home of the International Ballet Competition. Following the 1982 competition, ABC and PBS co-produced a 90-minute film "To Dance For Gold", which featured the IBC and aired around the world. Other documentaries featuring the USA International Ballet Competition have been seen on the Arts and Entertainment and Bravo networks; and

WHEREAS, it is with great pride that we recognize the artistic and economic contributions of the staff and volunteers of this International Ballet Competition, which has brought honor and prestige to the Capitol City and 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 commend and congratulate the USA International Ballet Competition held in Jackson, Mississippi, upon its receipt of the 2003 Governor’s Excellence in the Arts Award in the category of Artistic Achievement in Dance, and extend to the staff and volunteers of this program the thanks of the Legislature and our wish for success in their future competitions.
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to the Chairman of the International Ballet Competition Committee at induction ceremonies on February 28, 2003, and be made available to the Capitol Press Corps.