

By: Representative Snowden

To: Rules

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 83

1 A RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE MISSISSIPPI ARTS AND
2 ENTERTAINMENT EXPERIENCE (THE MAX) UPON ITS GRAND OPENING AND
3 CONGRATULATING A PREMIER CATEGORY OF EIGHTEEN LEGENDARY
4 MISSISSIPPI ACTORS AND ACTRESSES, ARTISTS, AUTHORS, MUSICIANS,
5 PLAYWRIGHTS AND THESPIANS, UPON BEING INDUCTED INTO THE INAUGURAL
6 CLASS OF THE MISSISSIPPI ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT EXPERIENCE HALL OF
7 FAME.

8 WHEREAS, the Mississippi Arts and Entertainment Experience,
9 known as (The MAX), recognizes that Mississippi is a land of arts
10 and entertainment legends and has committed itself to a goal of
11 showcasing Mississippi's global legacy by honoring our legends and
12 inspiring tomorrow's artists to follow their own creative dreams;
13 and

14 WHEREAS, in 2001, we, the Mississippi State Legislature
15 enacted Senate Bill No. 2666 to establish the Southern Arts and
16 Entertainment Center, Inc., now known as the Mississippi Arts and
17 Entertainment Experience; and

18 WHEREAS, over the course of the next decade following the
19 2001 legislative enactment, The MAX made slow but steady progress



toward fundraising goals, despite financial blows from Hurricane Katrina and an economic recession; and

WHEREAS, due to these efforts, a Hollywood-Style Walk of Fame was unveiled on February 15, 2009, which leads from the Mississippi State University Riley Center to the entrance of The MAX; and

WHEREAS, the Hall of Fame is an integral part of the Mississippi Arts and Entertainment Experience (The MAX), located in downtown Meridian, and has been officially designated by the Legislature as the State of Mississippi's official Arts and Entertainment Museum and Hall of Fame, the ceremonial groundbreaking for which took place on October 3, 2015, and for which the official grand opening is scheduled for late 2017 or early 2018; and

WHEREAS, the initial inductees of the Hall of Fame are: Walter Anderson, William Faulkner, Morgan Freeman, John Grisham, Jim Henson, Robert Johnson, James Earl Jones, B.B. King, George Ohr, Elvis Presley, Leontyne Price, Jimmie Rodgers, Sela Ward, Muddy Waters, Eudora Welty, Tennessee Williams, Oprah Winfrey and Richard Wright; and

WHEREAS, Walter Anderson, a New Orleans-born painter who made Ocean Springs his permanent residence and created drawings, paintings, block prints and ceramics inspired by the Mississippi Gulf Coast, was posthumously awarded the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters Award in 1989, honored for his 100th birthday by



the Smithsonian Institute with a retrospective showing of his artwork during 2003-2004, and worked with his brothers at Shearwater Pottery, which remains a thriving operation in Ocean Springs today; and

WHEREAS, William Faulkner, Mississippi's sole Nobel Prize recipient and a two-time Pulitzer Prize winning author born in New Albany, Mississippi, who grew up in Oxford, came to national acclaim after attending the University of Mississippi for only one year before going on to write such literary masterpieces as *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I lay Dying* and *Absalom, Absalom!*; and

WHEREAS, Morgan Freeman, who spent time as a child living in Charleston and Greenwood, Mississippi, before making his return to Charleston, Mississippi, as a highly acclaimed actor and producer, has earned a Golden Globe nomination for Best Actor for the 1989 heart-tugging classic *Driving Miss Daisy*, an Oscar win for Best Supporting Actor in Clint Eastwood's *Million Dollar Baby*, a National Medal of Arts and the Cecil B. Demille Award, in addition to being a deeply entrenched philanthropist who created the nonprofit Rock River Foundation, as well as a shrewd businessman as co-owner of Ground Zero, a blues club in Clarksdale; and

WHEREAS, John Grisham, a native of Southaven who now resides in Oxford, Mississippi, and serves on the Board of Directors for The Innocence Project, practiced law in his Southaven hometown for nearly a decade before serving in the Mississippi House of Representatives for two terms from 1983-1990, in addition to



penning several suspenseful novels that were also adapted to the big screen such as *A Time to Kill*, *The Firm*, the bestselling novel of 1991, and *The Pelican Brief*, literary works that won him two Harper Lee Prizes for Legal Fiction and a Peggy V. Helmerich Distinguished Author Award; and

WHEREAS, Jim Henson, born in Greenville, but who spent much of his childhood in Leland, Mississippi, gained his stardom as a masterful children's puppeteer, artist, director, producer and cartoonist while working for Sesame Street, where he was the visionary genius behind the creation of such larger-than-life and lovable characters as Kermit the Frog (for whom he was also the original voice), Big Bird, Elmo, Bert and Ernie, who entered our homes and hearts through routine broadcasts on PBS, as well as serving as the creative genius of the comical, energetic and sometimes rambunctious Muppets, which won eight Emmys: one for his first show, *Sam and Friends*; three for *The Muppet Show*; and four for *Jim Henson's Muppet Babies*; and

WHEREAS, Robert Johnson, a critically acclaimed Blues musician, born in Hazlehurst, Mississippi, who has been called the "King of the Delta Blues Singers" and has four songs included on the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame list of "500 Songs that Shaped Rock and Roll," was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame in 1980, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1986, inducted into the Mississippi Musician's Hall of Fame in 2000, awarded the Grammy Lifetime



Achievement Award in 2006 and was ranked in 2010 *Rolling Stone* among the "100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time"; and

WHEREAS, James Earl Jones, a well-known actor, born in Arkabutla, Mississippi, who has been described as "one of America's most distinguished and versatile" actors and "one of the greatest actors in American history," boasts a theatrical career that has spanned more than 60 years, including serving as the iconic, yet menacing voice of Darth Vader in the original *Star Wars* film series during their productions between 1977-1983, as well as other significant roles both on and off screen, which have resulted in his becoming: the second African-American male performer to be nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actor; the first actor to win two Emmys in the same year within the same drama category; a 2002 Kennedy Center Honors Honoree recognized by President George W. Bush; the 2011 recipient of an Honorary Academy Award; and the deserving recipient of two Tony Awards and a Golden Globe; and

WHEREAS, B.B. King, born Riley B. King in Berclair, Mississippi, situated between Itta Bena and Indianola, was a world-renowned Blues musician who was befitting of the title "The King of the Blues" and wore it well as the absolute foremost figure of the genre for over a half a century, as he is credited with lifting the Blues from the confines of the American South and delivering it to a huge audience the world over through his release of more than 50 albums, which accounted for: the sale of



more than four million records; winning 13 Grammys; performances in more than 90 countries; honors by presidents and kings alike; his 1984 induction into the Blues Hall of Fame; his 1987 induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame; his receipt of the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1987; and honorary doctorates from six universities, including Yale; and

WHEREAS, George Ohr of Biloxi, Mississippi, a famous ceramic artist and the self-proclaimed "Mad Potter of Biloxi," once described in the April 1899 edition of the journal *China, Glass, and Potter Review* as "one of the most interesting potters in the United States," has been cited by famous ceramics teacher, Charles Binns, as a genius, and while he never became famous during his lifetime, the discovery of his works by an antique dealer in 1968, cast him and his work into the artist limelight of a new era, for which the fanfare resulted in the 2010 opening of the Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art in Biloxi, where a large permanent collection of Ohr's work remains on display; and

WHEREAS, Elvis Presley, a native of Tupelo, Mississippi, who donned the undisputed title of "The King of Rock and Roll" for his musical prowess and heartthrob appeal, was a break out music legend regarded as the leading figure of Rock and Roll after a series of successful network television appearances and chart-topping records with much crossover appeal, particularly for a time that was considered the dawn of the Civil Rights Movement, which made him both enormously popular and controversial; yet his



marketability as a crooning celebrity afforded him the opportunity to: star in 32 successful films; received 14 Grammy nominations, three of which he won; received the 1971 Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award; sold over one billion records globally; induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1986, the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1998, the Gospel Music Hall of Fame in 2001, the Rockabilly Hall of Fame in 2007 and Memphis Music Hall of Fame in 2012; and

WHEREAS, Leontyne Price, born and raised in Laurel, Mississippi, and who is known for her operatic soprano voice, which has been characterized as "vibrant," "soaring" and "a price beyond pearls," rose to international acclaim in the 1950s and 1960s, becoming the first African American to appear in a leading role in a televised opera, as well as the first African American to return to the Metropolitan Opera in multiple leading roles, which have been subsequently bolstered by numerous recordings that have earned her: 19 Grammy Awards, more than any other classical singer; the 1989 Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award; the 1964 Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Lyndon B. Johnson; the 1965 Spingarn Medal; a 1980 Kennedy Center Honors recognized by President Jimmy Carter; the 1985 National Medal of Arts; and numerous honorary degrees; and

WHEREAS, Jimmie Rodgers, a native of Meridian, Mississippi, and renowned country musician was bestowed the monikers "The Father of Country Music," "The Singing Brakeman" and "The Blue



Yodeler," and best known for his rhythmic yodeling, he was one of the first three musicians inducted into the newly established Country Music Hall of Fame in 1961, and in addition to being inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1970, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1986 and the Blues Hall of Fame in 2013, his song *Blue Yodel No. 9* was selected as one of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's "500 Songs that Shaped Rock and Roll," while being ranked No. 33 on CMT's "40 Greatest Men of Country Music" in 2003; and

WHEREAS, Sela Ward, born and raised in Meridian, Mississippi, and who attended the University of Alabama, has established herself as a force of reckoning in Tinseltown as an elite, well-versed and highly courted actress since gaining her big break in Hollywood in Burt Reynold's 1983 film *The Man Who Loved Women*, which has led to a highly productive and successful acting career that has garnered critical acclaim as a four-time Golden Globe winner for Best Actress, two-time Screen Actors Guild Award winner and four-time Emmy Award winner, through her performances in 19 films and 17 television programs and series, including *Sisters*, *CSI: New York* and *Graves*; and

WHEREAS, Muddy Waters, born in Issaquena County, Mississippi, was a Delta Blues musician whose song *Rollin' Stone*, was so popular that it influenced the name of a major music magazine and one of the world's most famous rock bands, in addition to having won six Grammys, he was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame in



1980, inducted posthumously into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1987, received the 1992 Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award and received Blues Foundation Awards posthumously in 1994, 1995, 2000, 2002 and 2006; and

WHEREAS, Eudora Welty, a Jackson, Mississippi, author, short story writer and novelist who attended the Mississippi State College for Women (currently Mississippi University for Women), penned *The Golden Apples* and *The Optimist's Daughter*, which won her the 1973 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and served as a precursor to her 1984 autobiography which sold over one hundred thousand copies, as well as numerous other works, all of which received notable literary review and placed the 1980 Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient in a prestigious, yet very small circle of literary greats; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee Williams, of Columbus, Mississippi, the award-winning playwright and Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient who wrote *The Glass Menagerie*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, which won a Drama Critics' Award and a Pulitzer Prize, and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, which won a Pulitzer Prize, was inducted into the American Theater Hall of Fame in 1979, and in whose honor the Tennessee Williams New Orleans Literary Festival has been held annually in New Orleans since 1986; and

WHEREAS, Oprah Winfrey, a Kosciusko, Mississippi, native, television host, actress, producer, philanthropist and entrepreneur, established Harpo Studios in 1988, making her the



219 third woman in the American entertainment industry to own her own
220 studio, and while initiating the National Child Protection Act in
221 1991, she was included in the *TIME*'s "100 Most Influential People
222 in the World" lists from 2004-2011, and in 2005 *Business Week*
223 named her the greatest Black philanthropist in American history,
224 eight years prior to being presented the Presidential Medal of
225 Freedom by President Barack Obama in 2013; and

226 WHEREAS, Richard Wright, born in Roxie, Mississippi, near
227 Natchez, an esteemed and revered author was awarded a Guggenheim
228 Fellowship in 1939, received the prestigious Spingarn Medal from
229 the NAACP in 1941, and penned literary classics such as *Black Boy*,
230 *Uncle Tom's Children* and *Native Son*, which was the first book by
231 an African-American author to be selected by the Book of the Month
232 Club, before having his likeness captured as a feature on the
233 United States postage stamp as the 25th installment of the
234 literary arts series; and

235 WHEREAS, each initial inductee represents a genre of arts and
236 entertainment from various periods in Mississippi's rich history
237 and life experiences by those who sought to capture the state's
238 essence in its most authentic form, which has transformed the
239 entertainment, arts and literary world by their remarkably
240 indelible and artistic imprints; and

241 WHEREAS, it is the policy of the House of Representatives to
242 celebrate the accomplishments of Mississippians who have brought
243 great prestige and honor to our state and without whose



244 contributions, the making of the artistry and cultural influence
245 upon the entire world would not be possible:

246 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
247 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby
248 commend the Mississippi Arts and Entertainment Experience (The
249 MAX) upon its grand opening, and extend congratulations to this
250 premier category of eighteen legendary Mississippi actors and
251 actresses, artists, authors, musicians, playwrights and thespians
252 upon their being inducted into the inaugural class of the
253 Mississippi Arts and Entertainment Experience Hall of Fame.

254 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
255 furnished to the Mississippi Arts and Entertainment Experience
256 (The MAX), to each inductee or his or her designated
257 representative or surviving family members, and to the members of
258 the Capitol Press Corps.

