

By: Representative Straughter

To: Rules

## HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 88

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION MOURNING THE LOSS AND COMMEMORATING  
2 THE LIFE AND STELLAR MUSIC CAREER OF MISSISSIPPI BLUES AND SOUL  
3 LEGEND DENISE LASALLE AND EXPRESSING DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO HER  
4 FAMILY AND FRIENDS UPON HER PASSING.

5 WHEREAS, it is written in Ecclesiastes 3:1, "To everything  
6 there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the Heaven,"  
7 and as such, the immaculate author and finisher of our soul's  
8 destiny summoned the mortal presence of dearly beloved Mississippi  
9 songbird, renowned Mississippi R&B singer, songwriter and record  
10 producer, the incomparable Mrs. Denise LaSalle, as she has made  
11 life's final transition from earthly travailing to heavenly  
12 reward, rendering great sorrow and loss to her family, friends and  
13 fan base; and

14 WHEREAS, born Ora Denise Allen on July 16, 1934, in the  
15 hamlet of Sidon, Leflore County, Mississippi, situated in the  
16 heart of the Mississippi Delta, the seventh of eight children to  
17 Mr. Nathaniel Allen, Sr., and Mrs. Nancy Cooper Allen; the State  
18 of Mississippi lost a wonderful friend and icon with the passing  
19 of Mrs. LaSalle, hailed by her fans as the "Queen of the Blues,"



20 on January 8, 2018, and there is now a hush in our hearts as we  
21 come together to pay our respects to the memory of one who has  
22 been called to join that innumerable heavenly caravan as she now  
23 enjoys the eternal peace described in Luke 2:29, "Lord, now you  
24 are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word";  
25 and

26 WHEREAS, at the tender age of seven, her family moved to  
27 Belzoni, Mississippi, where LaSalle attended Belzoni Colored  
28 School, which later became McNair School, and sang in the church  
29 while also honing her vocal acuity by listening to country music  
30 and blues on the radio before joining the "Great Migration" of  
31 African Americans from the South to northern parts of the country;  
32 and

33 WHEREAS, as a young teenage bride, she moved to Chicago to  
34 escape the harshness that the reality of life presented in  
35 Mississippi where she decided to pursue her talent in the music  
36 industry, first singing with a gospel group, the Sacred Five and  
37 while working as a barmaid in 1963, Denise met her music mentor,  
38 Billy "The Kid" Emerson, who would serve as producer for "Love  
39 Reputation" on Tarpon Records in 1966 and reissued on Chess  
40 Records in 1967; and

41 WHEREAS, a durable Blues and soul singer and songwriter who  
42 in a half-century-long career delved into song, love, cheating,  
43 pleasure and heartache, mixing romance with fun, LaSalle had  
44 initial hopes of becoming a writer, and even had a story published



45 in *Tan Magazine*, but after magazines rejected her other fiction,  
46 she turned to writing poems and songs, and the rest is a masterful  
47 song artist's history; and

48 WHEREAS, taking her stage surname, LaSalle, from a French  
49 character in a newspaper comic strip, Denise released several  
50 singles on Chess Records before starting her own production  
51 company, Crajon and its subsidiary labels Parka Records and Gold  
52 Star Records in 1969, with her then husband Bill Jones, where the  
53 couple recorded *The Sequins*, *Bill Coday* and LaSalle herself; and

54 WHEREAS, for her next singles, Mrs. LaSalle chose Memphis  
55 producer, Willie "Papa Willie" Mitchell, who had also produced Al  
56 Green's hits, to work his magic on "*Hung Up, Strung Out*" in  
57 Memphis' Royal Recording Studios, which enabled her to sign with  
58 Detroit label, Westbound Records, in 1970, a deal that proved  
59 rewarding with the 1971 release of the biggest hit of her career,  
60 the million-selling No. 1 R&B single "*Trapped by a Thing Called*  
61 *Love*," which also reached No. 13 on the Billboard Pop Chart, and  
62 became her only Top 40 crossover in the United States; and

63 WHEREAS, over the next 14 years, LaSalle was a prominent  
64 figure on the National R&B Charts with 16 hits, including, "*Now*  
65 *Run and Tell That*," "*Man Sized Job*," "*Love Me Right*," "*Don't Mess*  
66 *With My Tu-Tu*" and "*Married, But Not To Each Other*," a song that  
67 also became a country hit for Barbara Mandrell in 1977; and

68 WHEREAS, in 1982, Denise's musical leanings tendered slightly  
69 toward the Blues, when she penned "*Down Home Blues*" for Z.Z. Hill



70 and subsequently signed to Mississippi-based Malaco Label, where  
71 she recorded 10 albums, which consisted of several hits like "Lady  
72 in the Streets," "Down Home Blues," "Don't Mess With My Man" and  
73 "24 Hour Woman"; and

74 WHEREAS, after recognizing a lack of Blues music being played  
75 on the radio, Mrs. LaSalle championed the project for the  
76 preservation of the Blues genre by organizing the National  
77 Association for Preservation of the Blues (NAPOB) and founding the  
78 Blues Academy, which served as a forum to educate younger  
79 generations about the Blues at no cost; and

80 WHEREAS, having toured steadily, largely in the Southeast,  
81 with occasional trips to Europe, Mrs. LaSalle, who briefly made  
82 gospel albums from 1999 to 2001 before returning to secular music  
83 with albums like "Pay Before You Pump," was nominated by the Blues  
84 Foundation for a Blues Music Award in the Soul Blues Female Artist  
85 Category, alongside Mavis Staples and Bettye LaVette, and she was  
86 inducted into the Rhythm and Blues Music Hall of Fame in 2015; and

87 WHEREAS, making regular appearances to perform at the  
88 Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival, the longest-running  
89 authentic blues fest in the nation, sponsored by Mississippi  
90 Action for Community Education in Greenville, Mississippi,  
91 Denise's benevolence was unparalleled as she held fundraisers,  
92 raising thousands of dollars for the Mississippi Delta tornado  
93 victims; and



94           WHEREAS, though she has traversed the river of life to now  
95 stand on the celestial shores of Heaven's grandeur, to join the  
96 heavenly choir of archangels, the legacy of Mrs. LaSalle's memory  
97 will continue to refresh the hearts and fond memories of her  
98 beloved survivors: husband of 41 years, James E. Wolfe, Jr.;  
99 children, Bridgette Edwards, Lynn Hayden, Kenneth Ray Kight, Jr.,  
100 and Dawn Jones; sister, Naomi Pruitt; nine grandchildren,  
101 Samantha, Monet, Jamie-Lynn, Kealyn, Kenneth Ray III, Ray'Ven,  
102 Myles, Kinsleigh, Cedarius and Cyra; six godchildren and a host of  
103 other relatives and friends; and

104           WHEREAS, we encourage the family to find solace from the  
105 overwhelming sadness created by the earthly departure of their  
106 beloved family member in Revelation 21:4, wherein is recorded,  
107 "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there  
108 shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall  
109 there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away"  
110 and renewed in their faith that Mrs. LaSalle fulfilled the  
111 commandment of II Timothy 4:7 by having fought a good fight,  
112 finishing her course and keeping the faith until the hour of her  
113 departure was at hand; and

114           WHEREAS, it is the policy of this Legislature that we  
115 recognize the music and cultural contributions of this Mississippi  
116 legend who has served as "The R&B Queen Ambassador for the State  
117 of Mississippi":



118           NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF  
119 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE SENATE CONCURRING  
120 THEREIN, That we do hereby mourn the loss and commemorate the life  
121 and stellar career of Mississippi Blues and Soul Legend Denise  
122 LaSalle, and extend sincere sympathies to her family and friends  
123 upon her passing.

124           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be  
125 furnished to the surviving family of Mrs. Denise LaSalle and to  
126 the members of the Capitol Press Corps.

