

By: Representatives Baria, Hughes

To: Rules

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 102

1 A RESOLUTION COMMENDING AND CONGRATULATING BILL FERRIS FOR
2 WINNING TWO GRAMMY AWARDS FOR "VOICES OF MISSISSIPPI: ARTISTS AND
3 MUSICIANS DOCUMENTED BY WILLIAM FERRIS" AND FOR HIS DEDICATED
4 LIFELONG WORK IN PRESERVING SOUTHERN FOLKLORE AND MUSIC FOR FUTURE
5 GENERATIONS.

6 WHEREAS, renowned folklore archivist, historian and
7 professor, Bill Ferris, a native of Vicksburg, Mississippi, took
8 home the Grammy Award for Best Historical Album on February 10,
9 2019, for "*Voices of Mississippi: Artists and Musicians*
10 *Documented by William Ferris*," which was compiled from three
11 decades of his field recordings of gospel singers, blues singers
12 and storytellers; and

13 WHEREAS, Mr. Ferris also won a second Grammy Award for Best
14 Album Notes for David Evans' liner notes in the 120-page hardback
15 book that accompanies the four-disc box set, a ten-year project
16 that he actually has spent most of his adult life working on by
17 capturing, documenting, assembling and preserving Southern
18 folklore and music for future generations; and



19 WHEREAS, born in Vicksburg in 1942 and growing up on his
20 family's farm in a rural community south of town, Mr. Ferris began
21 recording local gospel music as a teenager in the 1950s, when he
22 realized that the beautiful hymns he had heard during Sunday
23 services at Rose Hill Church as a child were sung entirely from
24 memory, and when the singers were no longer there, the music would
25 simply disappear; and

26 WHEREAS, Mr. Ferris felt a personal responsibility to
27 preserve those services, and he began with audio recordings and
28 photographs and later filming the services, and his early work
29 with gospel music grew into recording amazing blues singers who
30 lived a few miles from his family farm, as well as many colorful
31 storytellers; and

32 WHEREAS, "*Voices of Mississippi*" connects the otherwise
33 disparate voices of musicians, artists and storytellers, a broad
34 spectrum of voices who have a rich, textured musical expression of
35 language, voices of unknown people whose stories would otherwise
36 be forgotten, and knowing that they were transitory gave Mr.
37 Ferris a sense of urgency to record those voices to preserve this
38 valuable treasure of history; and

39 WHEREAS, upon receiving the Grammy Award for his project, Mr.
40 Ferris said that because the Grammy is the pinnacle of recognition
41 for the field of music, the award brings these voices of
42 Mississippi musicians to a wider audience, and it helps people



understand that the roots of blues and rock 'n' roll and gospel and country music are all in Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ferris' work is archived and digitized in the Southern Folklife Collection at the University of North Carolina and has served as a powerful teaching tool for over 50 years in institutions of higher learning where he taught, including the University of North Carolina, Jackson State University, Yale University and the University of Mississippi, where he became the founding director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture in 1978; and

WHEREAS, currently a professor and an associate director of the Center for the Study of the American South at the University of North Carolina, Mr. Ferris has received a number of awards for his prodigious work on all aspects of Southern folklife, including a Pulitzer Prize nomination for co-editing and Encyclopedia of Southern Culture and helping Quincy Jones compose the score for the film "*The Color Purple*," and he has written and edited 10 books and created 15 documentary films, most of which are about African-American music and folklore from the Mississippi Delta; and

WHEREAS, initially inspired by the music and stories of the people in his rural farm community near Vicksburg, Mr. Ferris became the keeper of Southern folklife through his dedicated lifelong documentation of the American South, and particularly church gospel hymns, Delta Blues and work songs of Mississippi,



68 and the recognition of his life's work in preserving Mississippi's
69 unique contributions to American music with two Grammy Awards has
70 brought his remarkable works to the attention of many more people
71 throughout the United States and the world; and

72 WHEREAS, it is the policy of the House of Representatives to
73 recognize and commend outstanding Mississippians such as Bill
74 Ferris, whose valuable life works and contributions to American
75 society and preservation of Southern folklife and have brought
76 honor and pride to the people of the State of Mississippi:

77 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
78 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, That we commend and
79 congratulate Bill Ferris for winning two Grammy Awards for "*Voices*
80 *of Mississippi: Artists and Musicians Documented by William*
81 *Ferris*" and for his dedicated lifelong work in preserving Southern
82 folklore and music for future generations, and extend best wishes
83 for continued success in all of his future endeavors.

84 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
85 furnished to Bill Ferris and to the members of the Capitol Press
86 Corps.

