

By: Senator(s) Parker, Blackwell, McLendon,
Barnett, Butler (38th), Chassaniol, England,
Jackson, McCaughn, Michel, Moran, Norwood,
Seymour, Sparks, Thomas, Williams, Simmons
(13th)

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 512

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION MOURNING THE LOSS AND CELEBRATING THE
2 CONTRIBUTIONS AND CAREER OF MISSISSIPPI MUSIC ICON AND ROCK AND
3 ROLL LEGEND JERRY LEE LEWIS OF NESBIT, DESOTO COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI,
4 AND EXPRESSING THE SYMPATHY OF THE LEGISLATURE ON HIS PASSING.

5 WHEREAS, Jerry Lee Lewis, "The Killer," whose hammering
6 boogie-woogie piano, unleashed-tomcat voice, and unapologetic bad
7 boy persona made him a pioneer of rock & roll and rockabilly music
8 and an early rival of Elvis Presley, passed away on October 28,
9 2022. Lewis died at his home in Desoto County, Mississippi, with
10 his seventh wife, Judith Coghlan, by his side. He was 87; and

11 WHEREAS, Lewis' two 1957 singles, "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin'
12 On" and "Great Balls of Fire," were some of rock's earliest and
13 most primal hits. His howling, whooping, libidinous performances
14 announced, as defiantly as any other records of the period, that a
15 new style of music had arrived and would take zero prisoners. "I
16 had created rock & roll before they ever thought about having rock
17 & roll," Lewis told *Rolling Stone* in 2014. "When Elvis come out,
18 he was rockabilly. When I come out with 'Whole Lotta Shakin'



19 Goin' On,' that was rock & roll. That's when the name 'rock &
20 roll' was put in front"; and

21 WHEREAS, born September 29, 1935, in Ferriday, Louisiana,
22 Lewis grew up poor. Around the house, young Jerry Lee was exposed
23 to cowboy music, blues 78s, and swing records, and he sneaked into
24 local clubs to hear the likes of Ray Charles and B.B. King.
25 Although he was proficient on the drums, Lewis began playing piano
26 at age eight. Lewis' father mortgaged their farm to buy him a
27 piano, and an older cousin taught him the boogie-woogie style soon
28 after. He gave his first public performance at age 15 in the
29 parking lot of a car dealership. He once said that the first song
30 he learned to play was "Silent Night," but, as he told *Rolling*
31 *Stone*, "I played it rock & roll style"; and

32 WHEREAS, Lewis' life was completely altered when he and his
33 father drove to Sun Records in Memphis. To afford the trip, the
34 elder Lewis sold 33 dozen eggs from his farm. Thanks to Presley,
35 Sun Records was the place to go for many aspiring musicians.
36 Label Head Sam Phillips wasn't present that day, but Chief
37 Engineer Jack Clement was, and after hearing Lewis sing and play
38 country songs, he advised Lewis to focus on rock & roll instead.
39 On a return trip to Sun, Lewis cut a few more rock songs,
40 including the country hit "Crazy Arms," which Phillips then heard.
41 "Where the hell did this man come from?" Phillips recalled to
42 *Rolling Stone* in 1979. In Lewis, Phillips saw a young, raw talent
43 equal to that of his biggest star, Presley; and



44 WHEREAS, at the Sun Recording Studios in Memphis in 1956,
45 along with Carl Perkins, Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash, Lewis was
46 part of the "Million Dollar Quartet"; and

47 WHEREAS, at the end of one of his Sun recording sessions,
48 Lewis offhandedly suggested he cut a song he'd been playing on and
49 off. With no rehearsal with the band, Lewis bashed out "Whole
50 Lotta Shakin' Goin' On." Released in early 1957, the song
51 exploded on the charts, and with good reason. From its barreling
52 piano to Lewis' super-suggestive delivery, the song made other
53 greats sound tame. Both that hit and its follow-up cover, Otis
54 Blackwell's "Great Balls of Fire," weren't just dynamic, but also
55 historic. They landed in the Top Five of the country, pop and R&B
56 charts simultaneously; and

57 WHEREAS, Lewis kept working and recording. His *Live at the*
58 *Star-Club, Hamburg* album, taped in 1964, is still considered one
59 of rock's greatest concert records. He dug into blues, gospel,
60 and country. Some of Lewis' 1950s hits made the country charts,
61 and in 1968 he migrated to the genre. "Another Place Another
62 Time" kick-started a string of country hits, and he was reborn as
63 a honky-tonk singer with his career restored. He returned to the
64 pop charts in 1972 with a cover of Kris Kristofferson's "Me and
65 Bobby McGee." As proof of how much he was still revered, Lewis'
66 1972 album *The Session*, cut in London, features cameos from Peter
67 Frampton and Alvin Lee, among others. Lewis rarely slowed down
68 into the 80s, cutting a few rock-friendly albums for Elektra, and



69 he continued touring and recording, keeping his legend alive. He
70 was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1986. In 1989,
71 his life was immortalized onscreen in *Great Balls of Fire*,
72 featuring Dennis Quaid; and

73 WHEREAS, for all the turmoil and controversy about his life,
74 Lewis continued to loom large in the culture. He recorded two
75 well-received albums of duets, 2006's *Last Man Standing* and 2010's
76 *Mean Old Man*, featuring legends Jimmy Page, Eric Clapton, Mick
77 Jagger, Keith Richards, John Mayer, Rod Stewart, Merle Haggard,
78 Kid Rock and John Fogerty. Lewis was also the first act to
79 perform during the 25th-anniversary Rock & Roll Hall of Fame
80 concerts at Madison Square Garden in 2009. Moreover, his famous
81 1956 jam session with Presley, Johnny Cash and Carl Perkins was
82 turned into a Broadway musical, *Million Dollar Quartet*, the
83 following year. At the 2022 Cannes Film Festival, director Ethan
84 Coen premiered *Jerry Lee Lewis: Trouble in Mind*, his homage
85 documentary on the icon; and

86 WHEREAS, in October of 2022, Lewis was inducted into the
87 Country Music Hall of Fame. He will be remembered for his
88 lifetime of hillbilly wildness, and he will be renowned for his
89 seizure of the musical moment at the dawn of rock & roll, when his
90 incomparable talent was intoxicating, playing out his defiant
91 dramas on the keyboard in the studio and on the stage and making
92 rock & roll history; and



93 WHEREAS, Jerry Lee Lewis is survived by his wife, Judith, and
94 his children Ronnie, Phoebe, Lori and Jerry Lee III; and

95 WHEREAS, Jerry Lee is known as the last survivor of rock and
96 roll's golden generation, and he will be celebrated for his impact
97 on Mississippi, American pop culture and the rock music rebellion:

98 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
99 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That
100 we do hereby mourn the loss and celebrate the contributions and
101 career of Mississippi music icon Jerry Lee Lewis of Nesbit, Desoto
102 County, Mississippi, and express to his surviving family the
103 sympathy of the Legislature on the passing of this Mississippi
104 rock & roll legend.

105 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That this resolution be presented to
106 the surviving family of Jerry Lee Lewis, forwarded to the
107 Mississippi Music Hall of Fame and the National Rock & Roll Hall
108 of Fame and be made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

