

2017 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 1063

Commemorating the life and legacy of Ella Jane Fitzgerald.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 21, 2017
Agreed to by the Senate, February 23, 2017

WHEREAS, Ella Jane Fitzgerald, a native of Newport News and the first female vocalist to win a Grammy Award, changed the cultural landscape of the United States through her enchanting vocals and beloved renditions of American standards and jazz classics; and

WHEREAS, born on April 25, 1917, Ella Fitzgerald lived in Newport News until the 1920s, when she moved to New York City with her mother; with dreams of becoming an entertainer, she entered an amateur singing contest at the Apollo Theater on November 21, 1934, and claimed first prize; and

WHEREAS, soon thereafter, Ella Fitzgerald joined the Chick Webb Band and regularly sang at the Savoy; she co-wrote and released her first No. 1 hit, "A-Tisket, A-Tasket" in 1938, and she became the leader of the Chick Webb Band, which she renamed Ella Fitzgerald and Her Famous Orchestra, in 1939; and

WHEREAS, in the 1940s, Ella Fitzgerald signed a deal with Decca Records and began working with the future founder of Verve Records; she also toured with Dizzy Gillespie, with whom she honed her unique vocal style and began to incorporate the scat singing techniques that became a hallmark of her music; and

WHEREAS, Ella Fitzgerald earned the nickname "The First Lady of Song" during the height of her career in the 1950s and 1960s; her incredible vocal range and astonishing ability to mimic instrumental sounds helped propel her to awards for best female vocal performance and best individual jazz performance at the inaugural Grammy Awards in 1958; and

WHEREAS, Ella Fitzgerald went on to earn more than a dozen Grammy Awards, the NAACP Image Award for Lifetime Achievement, the George Peabody Medal, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom over the course of her illustrious career; she recorded more than 200 albums and more than 2,000 songs, working with such luminaries as Count Basie, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Frank Sinatra; and

WHEREAS, Ella Fitzgerald recorded her last song in 1989 and gave her last public performance at Carnegie Hall in New York City in 1991; she died at her home in California on June 15, 1996, leaving behind an indelible influence on generations of singers across a wide swathe of musical genres; and

WHEREAS, the City of Newport News has celebrated Ella Fitzgerald's life and legacy every April since 1998 with the Ella Fitzgerald Music Festival, and in 2017, events throughout the United States and the world will commemorate her 100th birthday; and

WHEREAS, the City of Newport News began its yearlong celebration of Ella Fitzgerald's life on January 15, 2017, with the opening night of Ella's Place, an impromptu jazz club in the City Center at Oyster Point organized by the city and the Downing-Gross Cultural Arts Center and featuring music by the Virginia Symphony Orchestra's Jazz Ensemble; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commemorate the life and legacy of Ella Jane Fitzgerald on the occasion of her 100th birthday; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Ella Jane Fitzgerald as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for her contributions to music and culture in the United States.

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