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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 356

Offered February 21, 2006

Commending Bristol, Virginia, on the occasion of its 150th anniversary.

Patrons—Johnson and Kilgore; Senator: Wampler

WHEREAS, the border town of Bristol, Virginia-Tennessee, was founded in the year 1852 by Joseph Rhea Anderson; and

WHEREAS, when Joseph Rhea Anderson realized that the railroad was coming to the area, he bought 100 acres of land where two railroad surveys met, laid out the land for the original town of Bristol, and lots were sold and building began in 1853; and

WHEREAS, Bristol, Tennessee, was incorporated on February 22, 1856, and Bristol, Virginia, was incorporated on March 5, 1856; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia and Tennessee Railroads reached Bristol in the summer of 1856 and the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad reached Bristol from the southwest in 1858, so for many years Bristol was served by two railroad depots; and

WHEREAS, in 1881 both states claimed State Street at the heart of the city as its border and 10 years later the state line debate was finally settled by an extensive survey by the federal government and a decision by the Supreme Court of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Bristol flourished with the addition of the residential areas of Solar Hill and Virginia Hill and by 1900 the population had grown to 10,000 citizens; and

WHEREAS, in 1927 Ralph Peer of the Victor Talking Machine Company came to Bristol to look for country music talent on the recommendation of Mountain Music recording artist "Pop" Stoneman; and

WHEREAS, the historic "Bristol Sessions" launched the careers of the Carter Family, the Stonemans, and Jimmie Rodgers, who became the pioneers of modern country music; historians refer to the artistic explosion resulting from the emergence of these renowned artists in American culture as the "Big Bang" of country music; and

WHEREAS, Bristol was the home of Country Music Hall of Fame inductee and popular entertainer Tennessee Ernie Ford; and

WHEREAS, the theme for the 1956 Bristol Centennial was a "Tale of Two Cities" and the celebration was one of the grandest events in the history of the twin cities; and

WHEREAS, Bristol residents and visitors enjoyed a festive 10-week celebration from May 26 to August 4 orchestrated by a professional production company, the John Rogers Producing Company; and

WHEREAS, in 1960 two Bristol natives, Larry Carrier and Carl Moore, decided to build a stock car race track in Northeast Tennessee modeled after Charlotte Motor Speedway; and

WHEREAS, Bristol International Speedway was completed in 1961 and eventually sold to Bruton Smith, owner of Charlotte Motor Speedway; by 1996 the track's name was officially changed to the Bristol Motor Speedway; and when 15,000 seats were added in August 1996, seating capacity soared to 86,000, eventually making the speedway one of the most popular events on the NASCAR circuit; and

WHEREAS, in 1998 the United States Congress named Bristol the "Official Birthplace of Country Music" bringing national attention and acclaim to the twin cities; and

WHEREAS, country music and NASCAR are the heart and soul of the City of Bristol, a favorite destination for countless tourists and fans across the nation; and

WHEREAS, in the 1990s, Bristol began preserving its cherished historic landmarks, starting with the beautiful Paramount Theatre and including renovation of the Old Customs House and the historic Train Station; and

WHEREAS, revitalization projects in downtown Bristol and the opening of the new Bristol Public Library have provided a new vigor to downtown Bristol inspiring future growth and prosperity that will extend beyond the sesquicentennial year celebration into the future; and

WHEREAS, an array of festivities and commemorative events are planned for both cities with the theme "Celebrating 150 Years of Heritage & Harmony"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly commend and congratulate Bristol, Virginia, on the occasion of its 150th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to representatives of the City of Bristol, Virginia, as an expression of the General Assembly's best wishes for a joyful anniversary celebration.

INTRODUCED

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