

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 672

Commemorating the life and legacy of Arthur William Crudup.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 20, 2023

Agreed to by the Senate, February 22, 2023

WHEREAS, Arthur William Crudup, a singer, songwriter, guitarist, bluesman, and one of the founding fathers of rock and roll, inspired generations of musicians through his spellbinding rhythms, soulful voice, and captivating presence; and

WHEREAS, Arthur "Big Boy" William Crudup was born in 1905 in Forest, Mississippi, to a family of migrant workers who were traveling throughout the American South and Midwest; he began to hone his musical talents singing gospel music and later played in dance halls in and around his hometown; and

WHEREAS, in 1939, Big Boy Crudup traveled to Chicago, Illinois, as a member of a quartet called the Harmonizing Four and stayed in the area as a solo musician; he was discovered by record producer Lester Melrose while working as a street singer and later signed with the RCA Victor label Bluebird Records; and

WHEREAS, Big Boy Crudup recorded numerous songs in the late 1940s and gained popularity as a club performer in the southern United States in the 1950s; and

WHEREAS, in 1954, Elvis Presley recorded Big Boy Crudup's "That's All Right" as "That's All Right, Mama" for his debut single; the release was an instant hit, is now hailed as one of the greatest songs of all time, and is often considered one of the first songs in the rock and roll genre; and

WHEREAS, Elvis Presley subsequently recorded two other songs by Big Boy Crudup, "My Baby Left Me" and "So Glad You're Mine," and other big name artists like Elton John and Rod Stewart followed suit in later years; and

WHEREAS, despite being credited as a composer, like other African American bluesmen at the time Big Boy Crudup struggled to recoup royalties from the use of his work and stopped recording new music due to royalty disputes; and

WHEREAS, Big Boy Crudup relocated to Nassawadox where he raised his family and worked as a field laborer and bootlegger; he was known to sing at many drinking establishments on the Eastern Shore, including the Do-Drop Inn in Northampton County, one of the oldest continually owned and operated Black-owned businesses on the Eastern Shore, where he played every weekend in the late 1960s; and

WHEREAS, in 1968, blues promoter Dick Waterman signed as Big Boy Crudup's manager and began a largely unsuccessful campaign to secure unpaid royalties on Big Boy Crudup's behalf; in the early 1970s, Big Boy Crudup recorded his final album, "Roebuck Man," and toured as the opening act for blues artist Bonnie Raitt; and

WHEREAS, Big Boy Crudup died in Northampton County in March 1974 and was laid to rest in Franktown; he has been honored with a marker on the Mississippi Blues Trail, and his accomplishments received renewed attention with the release of the major motion picture *Elvis* in 2022; and

WHEREAS, after Big Boy Crudup's death Dick Waterman continued to pursue legal action on behalf of his estate; he ultimately settled with the record label, and the estate has received approximately \$3 million to date; and

WHEREAS, though best known as a blues artist for his early career, Big Boy Crudup's timeless style laid the foundation for the growth of rock and roll, and his legacy endures decades later through his sweeping influence on the genre; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commemorate the life and legacy of Arthur William Crudup, a longtime resident of the Eastern Shore who left an indelible mark on the blues and rock and roll music; 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 Arthur William Crudup as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for his contributions to the American cultural landscape.

ENROLLED

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