

1           A RESOLUTION honoring Renfro Valley Entertainment Center upon the occasion  
2 of its 80th anniversary.

3           WHEREAS, Renfro Valley Entertainment Center traces its roots to the 1930s, radio  
4 WLS, and Chicago, where John Lair heard a singer, Bradley Kincaid, whose musical style  
5 was familiar to John's upbringing in Rockcastle County, Kentucky; and

6           WHEREAS, after being given a job in the music library at WLS, John Lair helped  
7 bring singers and musicians from his native Kentucky to the station. One of those singers,  
8 Red Foley, helped John form "Renfro Valley Folks" with another entertainer, Whitey  
9 Ford. Known as the Renfro Valley Barn Dance, the show was based in Cincinnati from its  
10 formation on October 9, 1937. For two years, in Cincinnati and Dayton, Ohio, the Renfro  
11 Valley Barn Dance lived on while the Log Lodge and Tourist Court was being  
12 constructed in Renfro Valley, Kentucky; and

13           WHEREAS, from the humble roots along the north bank of Renfro Creek, and  
14 building upon the loyal audience of WLW radio, the doors opened wide as the WLW  
15 announcer proclaimed, "And now friends, by way of the magic carpet of radio, we take  
16 you to the big Old Barn in Renfro Valley, Kentucky with John Lair and the Renfro Valley  
17 Barn Dance"; and

18           WHEREAS, Louisville's WHAS radio station began the broadcasts during the  
19 second year, with shows growing from just once per week on Saturday evenings to more  
20 than 20 per week. A Sunday format, the Renfro Valley Gatherin', began in 1943 and is  
21 now the second oldest continuous radio broadcast in the United States. The Country Store  
22 program was broadcast live on CBS from the what is now the Music Store; and

23           WHEREAS, radio broadcasts declined in the 1950s as television became more  
24 popular. Hollywood chose Renfro Valley in 1953 for the premier of the movie, "It  
25 Happens Every Thursday," about the life of a small country newspaper. The Barn Dance  
26 entertainers, movie stars, and all local newspapers became involved in the event. In 1956,  
27 a series of television programs similar to the radio broadcast was filmed in Renfro Valley.

1 Times became tough in the early 1960s, when John Lair could no longer pay the  
2 entertainers, and he was forced to divide the ticket sales with them. In the middle to late  
3 1960s, several other movies and parts of movies were filmed in Renfro Valley; and

4 WHEREAS, in 1966, several well-known musicians, Ray Price, Willie Nelson,  
5 Hank Cochran, and music publisher Hal Smith, leased Renfro Valley with the option of  
6 buying, and it was eventually purchased by Hal Smith in 1968. Bluegrass artist Mac  
7 Wiseman came to Renfro Valley and started the Renfro Valley Bluegrass Festival in  
8 1970, and John Lair continued to spend every waking hour planning on purchasing it all  
9 back. In 1976, John bought back Renfro Valley, and in the 1980s, started what is now  
10 known as the Harvest Festival; and

11 WHEREAS, in 1984, the World's Fair in Knoxville, Tennessee, featured the Renfro  
12 Valley show, and some performers traveled to Frankfort to perform in the House of  
13 Representatives in an effort to make Renfro Valley the country music capital of  
14 Kentucky. Renfro Valley became the location of the Kentucky Music Hall of Fame and  
15 Museum; and

16 WHEREAS, the Lair family decided it could no longer manage Renfro Valley after  
17 John Lair passed in 1985, and they sold it to a group headed by Warren Rosenthal,  
18 founder of Jerry's and Long John Silver's restaurants, of Lexington, Kentucky. The New  
19 Barn was built along with the Renfro village and RV park. Two partners, Ralph Gabbard,  
20 CEO of Channel 27 in Lexington, and Glen Pennington, longtime entertainer at Renfro  
21 Valley, produced several television shows in the early 1990s. In 1993, the "Christmas in  
22 the Valley" show came to fruition, becoming the most successful show addition at Renfro  
23 Valley, watched by church congregations, school groups, and busloads of other fans from  
24 all over Kentucky and the eastern United States each year; and

25 WHEREAS, around 2000, the entirety of the Renfro Valley operation was given to  
26 the Board of Directors of the Kentucky Music Hall of Fame and Museum. Don and Vera  
27 Evans began making their appearances at Renfro Valley in front row seats nearly every

1 weekend, purchasing tickets to more than 1,100 shows before eventually purchasing  
2 Renfro Valley. Other shows have been added, but the Evans's mission was to ensure that  
3 Renfro Valley would never change;

4 NOW, THEREFORE,

5 *Be it resolved by the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of the*  
6 *Commonwealth of Kentucky:*

7 ➔Section 1. The members of the House of Representatives salute the history and  
8 legacy of Renfro Valley, reaffirm its status as a premier entertainment destination in the  
9 Commonwealth of Kentucky, and applaud the celebration of its 80th anniversary.

10 ➔Section 2. When the House of Representatives adjourns this day, it does so in  
11 honor of Renfro Valley Entertainment Center.

12 ➔Section 3. The Clerk of the House of Representatives is directed to transmit a  
13 copy of this Resolution to Representative R. Travis Brenda for delivery.