

1 A JOINT RESOLUTION designating the Jean Ritchie Memorial Highway in Perry
2 County.

3 WHEREAS, Jean Ruth Ritchie was born to Abigail Hall Ritchie and Balis Ritchie
4 on December 8, 1922, in Viper, Kentucky, the youngest of fourteen children; and

5 WHEREAS, Jean Ritchie was a curious child and spent her childhood learning
6 traditional songs from her parents and other relatives; and

7 WHEREAS, the Ritchie family was known for their love of traditional folk music
8 passed down for generations, and were a major repository of Appalachian Mountain
9 songs and traditions for folk music scholars, as detailed in Jean Ritchie's 1955 book titled
10 *Singing Family of the Cumberlands*; and

11 WHEREAS, Jean Ritchie attended Perry County High School and Cumberland
12 College, before graduating from the University of Kentucky in 1946 with a degree in
13 social work; and

14 WHEREAS, Jean Ritchie moved to New York City after graduation to become a
15 social worker at the Henry Street Settlement in the Lower East Side; and

16 WHEREAS, in 1950, Jean Ritchie married photographer George Pickow, with
17 whom she had two sons, Peter and Jonathan, both of whom would later perform and sing
18 with her; and

19 WHEREAS, by 1951, Jean Ritchie changed careers to become a full-time singer,
20 folk song collector, and songwriter; and

21 WHEREAS, while living in New York City, Jean Ritchie befriended many popular
22 folk musicians of the day, including Woody Guthrie, Oscar Brand, and Pete Seeger. Jean
23 Ritchie also met Alan Lomax, a noted American ethnomusicologist and folk music
24 historian, who recorded her extensively for the Library of Congress in 1951; and

25 WHEREAS, in 1952, Jean Ritchie released her first solo album of family songs and
26 was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to travel around Scotland and Ireland to study the
27 origins of the songs her family held dear in Appalachia; and

1 WHEREAS, Jean Ritchie published several books throughout her career, including
2 *A Garland of Mountain Song*, *The Dulcimer Book*, *Jean Ritchie's Swapping Song Book*,
3 *Folk Songs of the Southern Appalachians*, and *Jean Ritchie's Dulcimer People*; and

4 WHEREAS, Jean Ritchie performed at the first Newport Folk Festival in 1959, and
5 the burgeoning folk music revival of the day continued to grow into the 1960s, when folk
6 music became a major force in popular American music; and

7 WHEREAS, in 1977, Jean Ritchie's album *None but One* won the critics' award in
8 the Rolling Stone magazine; and

9 WHEREAS, Jean Ritchie was crucial to the popularity in the United States of the
10 mountain dulcimer, the instrument her family traditionally played with a goose feather,
11 and was the reason many were introduced to it. The dulcimer became so popular that Jean
12 Ritchie released an album titled *The Most Dulcimer* in 1984; and

13 WHEREAS, in 1996, a documentary film, *Mountain Born: The Jean Ritchie Story*,
14 was released nationwide and chronicled her life and work with Appalachian folk music;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, in 2002, Jean Ritchie received a National Heritage Fellowship from
17 the National Endowment for the Arts and was also inducted into the Kentucky Music
18 Hall of Fame; and

19 WHEREAS, Jean Ritchie left these earthly bounds on June 1, 2015, at her home in
20 Berea, Kentucky; and

21 WHEREAS, Jean Ritchie's impact on folk music continues to this day and her
22 enduring love of her family's music, home state of Kentucky, and the mountain dulcimer
23 lives on in those impacted by her music;

24 NOW, THEREFORE,

25 ***Be it resolved by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:***

26 ➡Section 1. The Transportation Cabinet shall designate a portion of Kentucky
27 Route 7 in Perry County, from mile point 1 to mile point 7, as the "Jean Ritchie Memorial

- 1 Highway" and shall, within 30 days of the effective date of this Resolution, erect
- 2 appropriate signage denoting this designation.