SHORT TITLE: Honoring the accomplishments and life of the late Ralph Ellison; distribution.

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2nd Session of the 44th Legislature (1994)

SENATE CONCURRENT
RESOLUTION NO. 059

By: Monson, Horner, Williams (Penny) and Leftwich of the Senate

and

Cox, Toure and Ross of the House

AS INTRODUCED

A Concurrent Resolution honoring the accomplishments and life of the late Ralph Ellison; and directing distribution.

WHEREAS, Ralph Waldo Ellison was born on March 1, 1914, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the son of Lewis Alfred Ellison and Ida Millsap Ellison. Named after essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson, he attended segregated public schools in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, although his family had many white friends who were frequent visitors in their home; and

WHEREAS, Ralph Ellison started playing the trumpet at eight years of age, played in his high school band and knew blues singer Jimmy Rushing and trumpeter Hot Lips Page. He studied classical composition at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, which he reached by riding freight trains; and

WHEREAS, Ralph Ellison moved to Harlem during his junior year in college, where he studied sculpture. However, he soon discovered writing was his primary talent. While in Harlem, he met poet Langston Hughes and novelist Richard Wright. Both influenced Ellison, and Wright became his mentor; and

WHEREAS, Ralph Ellison served in the Merchant Marine as a cook during World War II. After the war he began writing "Invisible

Man." After seven years of writing, it was completed and published by Random House in 1952. "Invisible Man" has been considered one of the most important works of fiction in the 20th century, has been read by millions, influenced scores of other writers such as Kurt Vonnegut and Joseph Heller and established Ralph Ellison as one of the major American writers of this century. Two collections of short stories, essays, reviews and criticisms have also been published, "Shadow and Act" published in 1964 and "Going to the Territory" in 1986; and

WHEREAS, "Invisible Man" was winner of the 1953 National Book Award and named by a 1965 Book Week poll of 200 writers, editors and critics as "the most distinguished single work" published in the previous 20 years. The book examines the beauty and heroism of the black experience and explores the theme of the black man's place in white society and his relationship to his own rich heritage; and

WHEREAS, Ralph Ellison served as a Trustee of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts; a Director of the Educational Broadcasting Corporation; a member of the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television, the National Portrait Gallery Committee and the National Council on the Arts; and

WHEREAS, Ralph Ellison lectured at the University of Chicago, Columbia, Yale, Bard College and the Salzburg Seminar in Austria. He was Albert Schweitzer Professor of the Humanities and Professor Emeritus at New York Universities. Ralph Ellison received honorary doctorates from Tuskegee Institute, Rutgers, the University of Michigan, Grinnel, Williams College, Adelphi, Long Island University, the College of William and Mary, Wake Forest, Bard College, the University of Maryland, Harvard, Wesleyan and Brown. The Ralph Ellison Library in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma is named in his honor; and

WHEREAS, Ralph Waldo Ellison was one of the first 12 recipients of the National Medal of Arts. He was also awarded the U.S. Medal

of Freedom. The French government awarded him the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Artes and Lettres and he was twice awarded the Prix de Rome Fellowship; and

WHEREAS, Ralph Waldo Ellison died on Saturday, April 16, 1994, in New York City, New York, at 80 years of age of pancreatic cancer.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE 2ND SESSION OF THE 44TH OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN:

THAT the Oklahoma State Legislature honors the accomplishments and life of the late Ralph Ellison, recognizes his talents and influence, and mourns the loss of a great and talented American.

THAT copies of this resolution be distributed to the Ralph Ellison Library in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; the State Arts Council of Oklahoma; the Oklahoma Room of the Allen Wright Memorial Library in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Oklahoma Foundation for the Humanities; World Literature Today; the Melvin B. Tolson Black Heritage Center at Langston University; his wife of 40 years, Fanny; and his brother, Herbert.

44-2-2453 THC