

SHORT TITLE: Praising the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame; honoring new inductees.

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2nd Session of the 46th Legislature (1998)

SENATE

RESOLUTION NO. 76

By: Horner

AS INTRODUCED

A Resolution praising the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame; honoring new inductees; and directing distribution.

WHEREAS, in 1988, the Oklahoma State Legislature created the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame as a statewide, nonprofit organization funded by grants through the Department of Tourism and the State Arts Council of Oklahoma, membership fees, corporate and individual contributions. In 1990, with the Board of Directors and functioning committees in place, the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame was incorporated. The home of the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame is in the Greenwood Cultural Center, located in the historic district of Tulsa, Oklahoma, which was once known as the "Black Wall Street of America"; and

WHEREAS, the mission of the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame is: to enhance the recognition of Oklahoma music and Oklahoma artists for their distinct contributions to unique American art forms; to build a repository for the artifacts, recordings, musical scores and memorabilia that are relevant to the history of gospel, blues and jazz by Oklahoma or Oklahoma-connected artists; to reach out to schools, colleges, churches and the community by presenting workshops conducted by national, regional and local artists, continuing Oklahoma's rich musical history; and to provide scholarships for students pursuing a degree in music education, thus continuing Oklahoma's rich musical history; and

WHEREAS, celebrating its tenth anniversary on June 17, 1998, the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame will recognize six jazz, blues and gospel music artists whose contributions to Oklahoma and the nation have been truly significant; and

WHEREAS, Elvin Bishop is a native Tulsan with a long, colorful career as a guitarist. For more than three decades, recording 15 solo albums and appearing in literally thousands of concerts, he has continued to record and perform his own, ever-evolving, style of blues, rock, R&B, country and even a touch of rap. Bishop took advantage of a National Merit Scholarship, in 1959, to attend the University of Chicago and dive into the "blues scene" in the South Side ghetto surrounding the campus. He quickly abandoned his university studies to go into blues music full time. In 1963, Bishop and Paul Butterfield, fellow blues enthusiast and University of Chicago student, formed the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, with Michael Bloomfield as second lead guitarist, and jolted the Chicago rock world with their introduction of electric Chicago blues that later influenced such groups as the Allman Brothers. Bishop moved to the San Francisco area in the late 1960's, joining the famous Fillmore jam sessions with the likes of Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix and B.B. King, then embarked on a solo career, recording first for Epic and then the now-defunct Capricorn, where his first big successes were rung up. Following a seven-year absence from the recording studios, Bishop signed with Alligator Records and scored with "Big Fun" in 1988, "Don't Let the Bossman Get You Down" in 1991, and "Ace In The Hole" in 1995; and

WHEREAS, the late Clarence Lee Dixon moved from Texas to Tulsa with his family when he was an elementary school student. Upon entering Booker T. Washington High School, he became the drummer in its marching band and held that position until he graduated. He lived in Tulsa most of his life and anchored the famous Ernie Fields band for decades as its drummer. His discipline and mastery of the

drums earned him a music scholarship from Xavier University and, later, an offer to play with the Ernie Fields orchestra, which he joined in 1931 until 1947. The orchestra's position as a musical and cultural mainstay in the Tulsa area is well established, but it built a national reputation by touring widely and often, as far east as Florida, as far west as Los Angeles, and to many of the nation's major venues - the Apollo in New York City, and other cities including Denver, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Washington D.C., St. Louis, Detroit and Chicago. "DownBeat" magazine sponsored nationwide polls beginning in the late 1930's to recognize the most outstanding jazz musicians, and Clarence Dixon was voted the No. 2 drummer in the poll in 1940. This acknowledgment of his talents made him much sought-after by other bands, but he remained with the family-oriented Fields organization. He and his wife, schoolmate Laura Ann Zackery, had one son, Clarence Del Dixon; and

WHEREAS, Ernestine Dillard, the gospel singer who electrified the world with her vocal tribute to the victims of the Murrah Building bombing with her passionate rendition of "God Bless America" became suddenly famous after that event. This former nurse had been selected from a field of 145 entrants to compete against professional female singers in the finals of the prestigious Savannah on Stage "American Traditions" competition. She is now appearing publicly throughout the United States and Europe, presenting her musical repertoire of anthems, spirituals, hymns, modern and traditional songs, and contemporary praise and inspirational music. Ms. Dillard's ministry, "Moments of Truth" focuses on love, unity and peace; and

WHEREAS, jazz drummer Washington Rucker also serves as a jazz historian and a jazz musician. Rucker was a native Tulsan reared in the South Haven community and was bused to Tulsa in the early 1940's. He attended Booker T. Washington elementary, Carver Junior High and Booker T. Washington High School. Washington Rucker, whose

mentors included inductee Clarence Dixon, got his first job as a teenager playing drums for blues artist Jimmy "Cry Cry" Hawkins. Later, he played jazz with saxophonist Harry Pettiford, and still later, drummed for top-notch R&B acts like Stevie Wonder and The Supremes in the house band at the Howard Theater in Washington, D.C. The diversity gained from these career experiences underlies the organization of "Bridging the Gap", his recently released debut album that includes both straight-ahead jazz and tunes that lean toward the pop character of "smooth jazz". Rucker has a bachelor's degree in history and has occasionally appeared in films - Martin Scorsese's "New York, New York" and Clint Eastwood's "Bird" - and does television commercials. He has recorded with Ray Charles and Cleo Laine on their "Porgy and Bess" album, Dizzy Gillespie and Sonny Stitt. An educator as well, Washington Rucker has been active in the Playboy Jazz Festival and the International Association of Jazz Appreciation "Jazz Goes to School" which provides free in-school concerts and workshops for junior and senior high school students; and

WHEREAS, non-Oklahoman Louie Bellson will be inducted into the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame as a "Living Legend". The inventor of the two-bass drum kit, Bellson is famous for his collaborations with the Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Tommy Dorsey and Benny Goodman bands and his work with Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Pearl Bailey and others. A phenomenal drum technician, Louie Bellson revitalized the Duke Ellington Orchestra in the 1950s and now leads his own group playing straight-down-the-pike Big Band music. Louis Bellson has had an annual jazz festival named after him. At 17 years of age he triumphed over 40,000 drummers to win Gene Krupa's national contest. He has written more than 300 compositions and published more than a dozen books on drums and percussion. Mr. Bellson has been voted into the halls of fame of "Modern Drummer" magazine and the Percussive Arts Society. He was named a Duke

Ellington Fellow in 1977 by Yale University. Mr. Bellson received honorary doctorates from Northern Illinois University and Augustana College, the prestigious American Jazz Masters Award from the National Endowment for the Arts and was nominated for a Grammy Award six times; and

WHEREAS, George W. Faison of New York will be inducted June 17 into the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame as a "Living Legend" and as its first "Non-Performing Artist", a new category. Faison will be formally presented to the Hall of Fame banquet audience by close friend, Maya Angelou, internationally known novelist, poet and dramatist. Born in Washington, D.C., Faison studied briefly at Howard University before gravitating to the theater. He joined the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1967, becoming principal dancer with the company. In 1971, he founded the George Faison Universal Dance Experience, which enjoyed great success throughout the United States for several years. The Ailey experience generated strong echoes in 1989, when the company's 30th anniversary celebration with Bill Cosby resulted in the NBC-TV special "Cosby Salutes Ailey", conceived, written, staged and produced by Faison. The inductee won a Tony award in 1975 for his choreography of "The Wiz", first African American so honored, and won a Drama Desk award for the same production. He received a Tony nomination for "Porgy and Bess" at Radio City Music Hall and an Emmy nomination for his work on the HBO TV special, "The Josephine Baker Story". Faison conceived, directed and choreographed a new musical, "Heaven and the Home Boy", adapted, directed and choreographed "King, the Musical", for President Clinton's 1997 inauguration, and recently founded A-PAC (the American Performing Arts Collaborative), a producing organization that will develop and present theatrical, educational and entertainment events. Faison has been a driving force in the theater as well as film, video, television, concert dance and concert staging for more than 20 years. He has staged

concert appearances and music videos for performers at the pinnacle of American popular music, including Ashford & Simpson, Roberta Flack, Natalie Cole, Betty Carter, Earth, Wind & Fire and Gladys Knight and the Pips. Faison has Tulsa connections to Chuck Cissel, Tony award winner in the "Chorus Line" who danced in Faison's "Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope" and "Pearlie" and also to Sudonna Ward, Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame and Juneteenth coordinator, who danced in "Cope".

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE 2ND SESSION OF THE 46TH OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE:

THAT the Oklahoma State Senate praises the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame.

THAT the Oklahoma State Senate honors the new inductees into the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame.

THAT copies of this resolution be distributed to the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame and its new inductees: Elvin Bishop, the family of Clarence Lee Dixon, Ernestine Dillard, Washington Rucker, Louie Bellson and George W. Faison.

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THC

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