HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - FLOOR VERSION

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

1st Session of the 54th Legislature (2013)

ENGROSSED SENATE
CONCURRENT
RESOLUTION NO. 23

By: Fields, Aldridge, Allen, Anderson, Ballenger, Barrington, Bass, Bingman, Boggs, Branan, Brecheen, Brinkley, Brooks, Brown, Burrage, Coates, Crain, Dahm, David, Ellis, Ford, Garrison, Griffin, Halligan, Holt, Ivester, Johnson (Constance), Johnson (Rob), Jolley, Justice, Loveless, Marlatt, Mazzei, McAffrey, Newberry, Paddack, Schulz, Sharp, Shaw, Shortey, Shumate, Simpson, Sparks, Standridge, Stanislawski, Sykes, Treat and Wyrick of the Senate

and

Roberts (Sean) of the House

A Concurrent Resolution honoring the life and achievements of Oklahoma-born ballerina, Maria Tallchief; mourning her passing and expressing condolences to her family; and directing distribution.

WHEREAS, Elizabeth Marie Tall Chief was born on January 24, 1925 in Fairfax, Oklahoma, to Ruth Porter Tall Chief, of Scottish-Irish

descent, and Alexander Joseph Tall Chief, a full-blood Osage Indian. Known as Betty Marie as a girl, she learned the traditions of the Osage from her grandmother, Eliza Bigheart Tall Chief; and

WHEREAS, at the age of the eight, her family moved to Los Angeles where she and her younger sister, Marjorie, studied dance. After high school, Betty Marie traveled to New York and apprenticed with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and in 1942, she became a member of the company's Corps de Ballet; and

WHEREAS, in that era, American ballerinas often adopted Russian stage names and she was pressured to change her name to Maria Tallchieva. Proud of her Osage heritage, she refused, but did change her name to Maria Tallchief; and

WHEREAS, Maria Tallchief rose to international stardom in the world of dance, becoming widely regarded as one of the most important ballerinas of the 20th century and considered to be America's first prima ballerina. She became the wife and muse of the great Russian choreographer, George Balanchine, and he choreographed starring roles for her in what have become some of the world's best loved ballets, including The Firebird, Swan Lake, and The Nutcracker. Although their marriage ended in 1951, the two continued to work together. Maria credited Balanchine with making her a star in the world of ballet; and

WHEREAS, Tallchief also danced with numerous other companies during her career. She was the first American ballerina to perform

with the Paris Opera, and the first to perform in Moscow's Bolshoi Theater. In 1952, she portrayed ballerina Anna Pavlova in the MGM film, "Million Dollar Mermaid." After retiring from the stage, Tallchief founded Chicago's Ballet School of the Lyric Opera and served as artistic director of the Chicago City Ballet; and

WHEREAS, despite her great success, she never forgot her Oklahoma roots. The Oklahoma Legislature declared June 29, 1953, as Maria Tallchief Day. In 1991, she and four other Oklahoma-born Indian prima ballerinas, Rosella Hightower, Yvonne Chouteau, Moscelyn Larkin, and Maria's sister, Marjorie Tallchief, were portrayed in artist Mike Larson's Oklahoma State Capitol mural, Flight of Spirit, and the five ballerinas were named Oklahoma cultural treasures in 1997. Her other awards included the Prestigious Kennedy Center Honors, the National Medal of Arts, and the National Women's Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, Maria Tallchief died on Thursday, April 11, 2013, in Chicago at the age of 88. She is survived by her daughter, Elise Paschen; son-in-law, Stuart Brainerd; her sister, Marjorie Tallchief; and two grandchildren.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE 1ST SESSION OF THE 54TH OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN:

THAT the Oklahoma Legislature honors the life and achievements of Oklahoma-born ballerina, Maria Tallchief.

THAT the Oklahoma Legislature mourns her passing and expresses condolences to her family.

THAT a copy of this resolution be distributed to her daughter, Elise Paschen.

DIRECT TO CALENDAR.