

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2007

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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION DR SJR15119-LG-614 (7/9)

Sponsors: Senator Foriest.

Referred to:

1 A JOINT RESOLUTION HONORING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF JOE
2 THOMPSON AND THE LATE ODELL THOMPSON, LEGENDARY NORTH
3 CAROLINA MUSICIANS.

4 Whereas, many North Carolinians have received local, national, and
5 international acclaim for their unique talents, including musicians and cousins Joe
6 Thompson and Odell Thompson; and

7 Whereas, Joe Thompson and Odell Thompson were born into a family of
8 talented musicians, including their fathers John Arch Thompson and Walter Thompson
9 and their grandfather, Bob Thompson, all of whom learned and continued the musical
10 techniques passed down by their ancestors; and

11 Whereas, without any formal lessons, Joe Thompson began playing the fiddle
12 at the age of five and soon joined his father and other family members in playing music
13 at square dances and frolics for both white and black audiences in their rural northern
14 Orange County community; and

15 Whereas, during the 1930s and 1940s, Joe Thompson, along with his brother,
16 Nathaniel Thompson, and his cousin, Odell Thompson, both on banjo, performed as a
17 traditional fiddle and banjo ensemble for various social events; and

18 Whereas, Joe Thompson was not only a talented fiddle player but also a
19 gifted singer and square dance caller; and

20 Whereas, during World War II, Joe Thompson served in the United States
21 Army from 1942 to 1945 and, upon his return to the United States, found that his style
22 of music was no longer popular; and

23 Whereas, Joe Thompson later moved to Mebane, North Carolina, and
24 provided for his family by working for a local furniture company for more than 35
25 years; and

26 Whereas, Odell Thompson settled in Alamance County with his family and
27 worked for a local mattress company for 20 years; and

1 Whereas, during the early 1970s, Joe Thompson and Odell Thompson were
2 encouraged to resume performing and found new audiences eager to hear them play;
3 and

4 Whereas, Joe Thompson and Odell Thompson played at family gatherings
5 and performed for radio and television audiences; and

6 Whereas, Joe Thompson and Odell Thompson became well known for their
7 music and were featured at the National Folk Life Festival in Washington, DC, the
8 National Folk Festival in Lowell, Massachusetts, Festival of American Fiddle Tunes in
9 Port Townsend, Washington, and the International Music Festival in Brisbane,
10 Australia; and

11 Whereas, Joe Thompson and Odell Thompson also performed at Carnegie
12 Hall and participated in various workshops and conferences; and

13 Whereas, Joe Thompson and Odell Thompson received numerous honors,
14 including the Brown-Hudson Award from the North Carolina Folklore Society, the
15 North Carolina Heritage Award, and the Folk Heritage Award from the National
16 Endowment for the Arts; and

17 Whereas, Joe Thompson was named one of the 12 recipients of the 2007
18 National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowships, the nation's highest
19 honor in the folk and traditional arts; and

20 Whereas, Joe Thompson and Odell Thompson thrilled audiences worldwide
21 until Odell's death in 1994; and

22 Whereas, Joe Thompson has continued to play the fiddle, teaching at
23 international fiddle and banjo conventions and mentoring a new generation of
24 African-American string band musicians; and

25 Whereas, at the age of 88, Joe Thompson is considered by many to be the
26 oldest if not the last African-American fiddler in North Carolina; and

27 Whereas, Joe Thompson has had a profound impact on traditional string band
28 music and thus has earned the admiration of the people of this State and the world;
29 Now, therefore,

30 Be it resolved by the Senate, the House of Representatives concurring:

31 **SECTION 1.** The General Assembly honors the memory of Odell
32 Thompson and expresses its appreciation for his invaluable contributions to North
33 Carolina's cultural heritage.

34 **SECTION 2.** The General Assembly wishes to pay tribute to native son Joe
35 Thompson, a fiddler of enormous talent and vision, for his accomplishments as a
36 musician and for his role in preserving the heritage of African-American string band
37 music.

38 **SECTION 3.** The Secretary of State shall transmit a certified copy of this
39 resolution to Joe Thompson and the family of Odell Thompson.

40 **SECTION 4.** This resolution is effective upon ratification.