

THE GRAND OLE OPRY

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this year the Grand Ole Opry celebrates 80 years of star-studded country entertainment. This venerated institution stands as one the most important traditions in radio broadcasting and country music. If not for the Grand Ole Opry, my hometown of Nashville would most likely have never gained that title of "Music City USA."

The Grand Ole Opry first broadcast on November 28, 1925. Originally called the WSM Barn Dance, the weekly radio show featured comedy and blue grass, gospel and country. Radio host George D. Hay made sure that every broadcast was kept "real down to Earth."

Today, the Opry stands as the longest running continuous weekly radio broadcast, with over 4,000 consecutive Saturday evening shows. Audiences can tune into the Grand Ole Opry via radio, satellite, television or Internet. The show is even broadcast by the Armed Forces Radio and Television Services Network to entertain our troops around the world.

Throughout its history, the Opry has embraced and celebrated the best in family entertainment, including those musical performances and comedy sketches that have warmed the hearts of millions throughout the South, all over the country and, indeed, throughout the world. Country great and Opry member Dolly Parton explains that at the Opry, "there's a circle of friends, and a circle of performers and a circle of love at the old place."

Jeanie Seely puts it this way:

The Grand Ole Opry is not an institution. It's not a building. It's the people, the performers, the people who come. That's the Grand Ole Opry. That's what makes it special.

And for new members, joining the Opry is joining a pantheon of country music greats. Roy Acuff, Chet Atkins, Johnny Cash, Dolly Parton, Minnie Pearl, Grandpa Jones, Garth Brooks, Vince Gill, and Reba McEntire, all have been members, and the list goes on. Even President Nixon has played on that Grand Ole Opry stage.

As Loretta Lynn recently told a newspaper:

If you've never played at the Grand Ole Opry, you haven't quite made it, yet.

The Opry has promoted country music in a unique way. It has promoted it to the entire world and has invited new generations to hear the best that country has to offer. I am honored to represent the home State of such a dynamic part of American culture and music history.

Today, I proudly introduce a Senate resolution commending the Grand Ole Opry for 80 years of music excellence.

COMMENDING THE GRAND OLE
OPRY

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 286, which was submitted earlier today.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 286) commending the Grand Ole Opry on the occasion of its 80th anniversary for its important role in the popularization of country music and for its 8 decades of musical and broadcast excellence.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. FRIST. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 286) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 286

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry is a pioneer of commercial radio in the United States, and is the longest running continuous radio program in the United States, having operated since November 28, 1925, and having broadcasted over 4,000 consecutive Saturday evening shows on WSM Radio, Nashville, Tennessee;

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry played an integral role in the commercial development of the country music industry, and in establishing Nashville, Tennessee, as "Music City USA";

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry has consistently promoted the best in live entertainment and provided a distinctive forum for connecting country music fans to musicians so as to promote the popularity of this uniquely American genre;

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry serves as a unique American icon that enshrines the rich musical history of country music, and preserves the tradition and character of the genre through commemorative performances and events;

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry is committed to quality performances, and the membership of the Grand Ole Opry represents the elite of country music performers, including generations of America's most talented musicians, encompassing the music legends of old and the superstars of today that continue to define American country music;

Whereas performers at the Grand Ole Opry have included such universally recognized names as Roy Acuff, Chet Atkins, Johnny Cash, Patsy Cline, Porter Wagoner, Little Jimmy Dickens, Connie Smith, Earl Scruggs, George Jones, Grandpa Jones, Loretta Lynn, Uncle Dave Macon, Dolly Parton, Minnie Pearl, Jim Reeves, Hank Williams, and many more;

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry celebrates the diversity of country music, with membership spanning both generation and genre, representing the best in folk, country, bluegrass, gospel, and comedy performances;

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry continues to utilize technological innovations to develop new avenues of connecting country music to its fans, and can be seen and heard around the world via television, radio, satellite radio, and the Internet;

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry provides heartening support to members of the Armed Forces by participating in the Department of Defense's America Supports You Program, providing live performances to American Forces serving abroad via the American Forces Radio and Television Services network;

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry is recognized as the world's premiere country music show, and continues to entertain millions of fans throughout the world, including United States Presidents and foreign dignitaries,

and serves as an emissary of American music and culture; and

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry will continue to impact American culture and music, and play an important role in presenting the best in country music to new generations of fans throughout the world, touching millions with music and comedy: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate commends the Grand Ole Opry on the occasion of its 80th anniversary for its important role in the popularization of country music, and for its 8 decades of musical and broadcast excellence.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I join the majority leader in the resolution that I have cosponsored honoring the Grand Ole Opry on its 80th birthday.

I ask unanimous consent to bring on the Senate floor this piece of demonstrative evidence which I hold in my hand and to which I will refer in a moment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Those of us of a certain age will recognize this straw hat with a garland of flowers and a price tag that says \$1.98 as the kind of hat that Minnie Pearl wore on the Grand Ole Opry on Friday and Saturday nights every year for about 40 years. Most of the time, Minnie Pearl was the Grand Ole Opry, along with Roy Acuff. She welcomed people with: Howdy, I'm so proud to be here. I didn't say it the way she would always say it. Thousands and thousands of Americans sat on the uncomfortable wooden pews in the back of the Ryman Auditorium and later at the Opry to watch this radio show. One of those was a young man from Minnesota named Garrison Keillor, who, in the 1970s, sat back there and imagined the show which we call today "The Prairie Home Companion."

A couple weekends ago, I was the guest announcer on the Grand Ole Opry. They didn't trust me with the Goo Goo candy bar commercial or with the 7 p.m. show which is nationally televised, so I was on at 8. But I did get to do the Martha White flour commercial and to introduce Porter Waggoner three times.

There is nothing quite like the Grand Ole Opry. There are 3,400 people out there every Friday night, every Saturday night, now sometimes on Tuesdays. Flashbulbs are popping. Everybody is having a good time.

There was Jimmy C. Newman from Louisiana who next year will be on the Grand Ole Opry for 50 years. There was Susan Haynes, the daughter of my law school roommate. This is her first year on the Grand Ole Opry. There was Carol Lee and Nora Lee, the back-up singers. They have been there a long time, too.

At 7 o'clock, there was Vince Gill who ended his hour-long session with a piece of jazz music. The Grand Ole Opry is getting more diversified. There was Keith Bilbrey backstage interviewing people. He was explaining what Charlie McCoy, the great harmonicist, once said about the four stages of being a country music star which sound a lot like being a politician. Stage No. 1 is, Who is Charlie McCoy? Stage No. 2 is, Get me Charlie McCoy. Stage No. 3 is, Get me somebody who sounds like Charlie McCoy. And stage No. 4 is, Who is Charlie McCoy?

The Opry was started so that the National Life and Accident Insurance Company could sell debit insurance. They got a big tower in Nashville. I think it is 50,000 watts. So all the people who were on little radio stations came to Nashville so they could be on the big radio station.

That is when Roy Acuff and Chet Atkins and Archie Grandpappy Campbell and Dolly Parton all moved from east Tennessee to Nashville. If you understand how important the Alamo is to Texas, you will understand how important the Grand Ole Opry is to Tennesseans, not just Tennesseans but many Americans, the 3,400 who every Friday and Saturday night have gone to thousands and thousands of these radio shows.

No one represented the Opry in its spirit better than Minnie Pearl. There is a photograph of Minnie in dressing room No. 1 backstage, which was Roy Acuff's dressing room until he died, which was the dressing room that Vince Gill was using on the night I was there as the guest announcer. There on the wall was a picture of a young Minnie Pearl in the early 1940s with this hat or a hat similar to this one.

Where did this \$1.98 price tag come from? I heard the story that night for the first time. Minnie was performing on the Opry. She pinned a garland of flowers to her hat. And during her performance, this price tag wiggled down and started dangling from her hat. She left it there for the next 40 years as a reminder that anybody can make a mistake and it is all right to make one.

Minnie Pearl was a talented woman who wanted to be Katharine Hepburn. As she said, that was already taken. She set a standard of conduct and style for the Grand Ole Opry that lasts and persists until today, and that style was simply that she was just a very nice person. She would sign the last autograph; she would say hello to anyone; she would pay a call on a Grand Ole Opry family member who was sick; she would see the last fan who had waited for 2 hours after the show.

Minnie Pearl told me one time: I have gotten to the point in life where I have decided if people are not nice, they are not so hot in my book no matter how big they are.

So in the spirit of Minnie Pearl and all of the thousands of Americans who have created and enjoyed the Grand Ole Opry, happy 80th birthday, Grand Ole Opry.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADERSHIP TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VITTER). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 30 minutes, with the first half of the time under the control of the majority leader or his designee and the second half of the time under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee.

The Senator from Oklahoma is recognized.

SAVING OUR TAXPAYERS' DOLLARS

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, let me recognize that Minnie Pearl is a tough act to follow. Nonetheless, we must move on. Today, I am going to announce a one-sentence initiative that I will try to put on the Labor-HHS appropriations bill. I won't be successful because there are some procedural reasons. It would take a supermajority. But at least we will get a vote down so we will have an idea about who in this Chamber is really serious about doing something about the deficit.

I had to oppose my dear friend and junior Senator from Oklahoma last week because of the unintended consequences of interfering with local self-determination, and I caution any effort that would substitute or preempt States' sovereignty in favor of centralized control in the Federal bureaucracy unless substantial cuts in spending are accomplished.

The Framers of the Constitution feared one thing above all else, and that was a tyrannical central Government made up of unaccountable Federal bureaucrats would someday be able to supersede States' rights in decisionmaking by locally elected representatives. There is nothing more conservative than this very principle of preserving local control against the centralized Government.

As the author of the Transportation reauthorization bill, I was very pleased at the way we drafted the legislation. We took a formula so that we could allocate funds to the States but then didn't tell the States what to do with them and said: You determine what your priorities should be at the State level. I believe it is a very good process. I was proud to be a part of that process.

There is a mentality in Washington, DC, that if a decision isn't made in Washington, it is not a good decision. The controversial Ketchikan to Gravina Island bridge in Alaska has become a rallying point about boon-

doggles, and maybe it is a boondoggle, but the people in Alaska didn't think so. They have 100 projects. All States do it differently. But in Alaska, they list 100 projects that are the projects they want to have someday. That particular bridge is ranked in the top 4 of those 100. I think also that we have to recognize that we in Washington do not really know what is the best thing for them.

The other thing that is very important is that most of the money, had this amendment passed, is in accordance with the formula. So if we directed them not to build their bridge, that money could still be spent in Alaska on other projects. We would just be saying that you have to spend the dollars in a way that we in Washington say is best for you.

I will support future amendments that will save taxpayers' dollars. In the meantime, there is something we can do: support the one-sentence amendment that I will introduce.

Beginning with fiscal year 2007 and thereafter nondefense, nontrust fund discretionary spending shall not exceed previous years without a two-thirds vote.

That is very simple, very straightforward, and something that will work. I recognize that we are only talking in this case about 20 percent of the budget because we have so many entitlements and, of course, the defense spending. But those entitlements are being addressed right now in the budget reconciliation. We need to wait and see how that washes out.

I had this as kind of a mission for a lot of years. I introduced the first amendment in 1987, the first year that I was here over in the other body at that time. But it goes all the way back to 1969 when then Senator Carl Curtis from Nebraska came up with the idea. He was the one who always wanted to the pass the amendment as an amendment to the Constitution. So he said, Why don't you out in Oklahoma preratify a constitutional amendment, so if we get enough States to do it, that would give us the power needed to try to pass a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution.

It never worked. I think the idea was right. I think this very simple solution is one we can address today. It will be something that will take care of these problems in a much simpler way and will maintain the authority out in the States where I believe it belongs. I have served as a mayor of a city, I have served in the State legislature, and I have served here. It has been my experience that the closer you get to home, the better the decisions, and that is consistent with what I am asking for today.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina is recognized.
Mr. DEMINT. I thank the Chair.

BUDGET RECONCILIATION

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, these are serious and difficult times for our