

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION mourning the death of Pete Seeger, distinguished citizen and devoted member of his community

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to pay tribute to citizens of the State of New York whose lifework and civic endeavor served to enhance the quality of life in their communities and the great State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Pete Seeger of Beacon, New York, died on Monday, January 27, 2014, at the age of 94; and

WHEREAS, Pete Seeger was born in Patterson, New York, on May 3, 1919, into an artistic family whose roots traced to colonial America; and

WHEREAS, His mother, Constance Edson Seeger, was a concert violinist and educator; his father, Charles, a Harvard educated musicologist; and

WHEREAS, He began playing the ukulele as a boarding school student and later would go on to learn the banjo, six-string guitar, twelve-string guitar, and the recorder; and

WHEREAS, Pete Seeger also attended Harvard, and in 1938, got his first semi-professional musical experience as a member of a touring puppet theater; and

WHEREAS, He was drafted into the wartime Army in 1942, and served honorably in the Pacific where he was trained as an airplane mechanic, but was reassigned to provide much needed entertainment to the American troops with music serving three and a half years in the Special Services and achieving the rank of Corporal; and

WHEREAS, On July 20, 1943, he married Toshi-Aline Ohta, and remained married for 69 years before Toshi's passing on July 9, 2013; and

WHEREAS, Pete Seeger and his wife Toshi first purchased a plot of land in Beacon, New York, in 1949, living there first in a trailer, then in a log cabin that they built themselves; and

WHEREAS, Pete Seeger embarked on a solo music career in 1958, recording prolifically for Moses Asch's independent label Folkways, and helped to stoke the "folk revival" of the late 1950s; and

WHEREAS, Pete Seeger contributed to the advancement of the Civil Rights Movement through his performance of "We Shall Overcome" at the 25th Anniversary of the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee with Rosa Parks and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in attendance in 1957; and

WHEREAS, Pete and Toshi Seeger marched in the historic voting rights marches from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama in March of 1965; and

WHEREAS, In 1966, Pete and Toshi Seeger founded Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Inc. located in Beacon, New York, along with the Great Hudson River Revival, an annual music and environmental festival that takes place at Croton Point Park in Croton, New York; and

WHEREAS, Pete Seeger and Hudson River Sloop Clearwater were instrumental in the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972, contributing to cleaner waters throughout New York State and the nation that are more fishable, swimmable, and drinkable; and

WHEREAS, Pete Seeger has been a recipient of numerous awards including the National Medal of Arts, a Kennedy Center Honor, a Harvard Arts Medal, the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize, and a George Peabody Medal; and

WHEREAS, Pete Seeger was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1996, and also won a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award along with the Grammy Award for Best Traditional Folk Album, Best Children's Album which included former students from J.V. Forrestal Elementary School in Beacon, New York, and a 2014 Grammy nomination for Best Audio Book; and

WHEREAS, Pete Seeger released dozens of albums and records along with compiling a series of instructional songbooks over a career that spanned

most of the 20th Century as well as the beginning of the 21st Century including a performance of "This Land Is Your Land" at the 2009 inauguration of President Barack Obama; and

WHEREAS, Throughout his storied musical career, Seeger collaborated with countless other musical icons including Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, Joan Baez, the Stanley Brothers, Mississippi John Hurt, Doc Watson, Reverend Gary Davis, Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Neil Young, John Mellencamp and Dave Matthews; and

WHEREAS, His more than 100 songs will endure for generations to come including his songs "Where Have All The Flowers Gone," "If I Had a Hammer," "Turn, Turn, Turn," "Kisses Sweeter Than Wine," and his self-proclaimed modest contribution to "We Shall Overcome"; and

WHEREAS, Pete Seeger traveled all across New York State, including Harlem, lending his voice, his music and his singular inspiration to movements born of conscience and calling; and

WHEREAS, He was instrumental in drawing attention to the issue of lead paint poisoning and aided in efforts to prevent it; was a partner in many local movements committed to equality and social justice, including seminal efforts that led to the eradication of apartheid; he was a vital presence in helping to save and preserve community gardens in Harlem, including the Joseph Daniel Wilson Memorial Gardens on West 122nd Street; he played in support of the Justice for Farmworkers Campaign at the Riverside Church in Harlem; he received an honorary doctorate from the Manhattan School of Music which was presented at the Riverside Church in Harlem and his passionate advocacy for the sanctity and environmental health of the Hudson River, which graces the edges of West Harlem has benefited generations of New Yorkers; and

WHEREAS, His survivors include his son, Daniel, along with his daughters, Mika and Tinya Seeger-Jackson; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, courage, and humility, Pete Seeger leaves behind a legacy of outspoken activism for civil rights, social justice, peace, and awareness for our environment by inspiring generations to believe that they can change the world by speaking out about the state of affairs in the world, and using grassroots activism to make extraordinary accomplishments; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Pete Seeger, distinguished citizen and devoted member of his community; and be it further

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RESO TEXT

2013

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Pete Seeger.