**A** **SENATE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE THE LATE MAXIE LEE WRIGHT DUKE FOR HER SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ESTABLISHMENT AND GROWTH OF THE WALHALLA PERFORMING ARTS CENTER.

Whereas, a native of Highlands, North Carolina, Maxie Lee Wright Duke was born on June 16, 1927 to parents Charles N. Wright and Helen Cabe Wright Wilson. She was an alumna of Western Carolina Teacher’s College and Clemson University, where she earned a master’s degree in education. She passed away on December 16, 2020 at the venerable age of ninety‑three; and

Whereas, an incredible visionary, Maxie Lee Wright Duke had a leading role in the restoration of the former Walhalla High School auditorium, which is now the Walhalla Performing Arts Center. Alongside Jean Phillips, she was part of the leadership in setting up the original charter for the Walhalla Auditorium Restoration Committee in 1991 to preserve and save the historic building. The committee raised funds to open the restored building as an arts center, with its first show in 2003; and

Whereas, due to Maxie’s many efforts, the Walhalla Performing Arts Center is now a vibrant part of Walhalla and Oconee County and draws a wide variety of entertainment to the county each year. It is an important part of the quality of life for the whole community and region, a treasure that will continue to bring performances to Walhalla for years to come, and an enduring legacy. Maxie’s contributions over the years were instrumental to the center’s success today; and

Whereas, a dedicated educator, Maxie taught in the Oconee County school system for eighteen years. She also served on the Oconee County School Board and South Carolina State School Board; and

Whereas, a civic leader in Walhalla and a political force in the Democratic Party, she was active in the local and state Democratic Party for decades and held many leadership positions, including Oconee County Democratic Party chair. As an activist, she spearheaded various advocacy efforts, including campaigns to widen Highway 28 and to save Old St. John’s Church; and

Whereas, Maxie contributed to *Some Waterfalls, Cascades and Shoals in Oconee County* and authored *Charlie and Helen‑Chronicles of Love, Heroism and Persistence*; and

Whereas, over the years, Maxie received a number of honors and awards, including being named First Lady of Walhalla, receiving the Order of the Silver Crescent, and being inducted into the South Carolina Democratic Women’s Hall of Fame; and

Whereas, Maxie was married to the late Albert A. Duke, Sr., and she had five children, Susan Clarkson, Margaret Powell, Albert A Duke Jr., Alisa Gunter, and Mary Helen Duke. She was “Granny Duke” to her grandchildren and “GIGI” to her great-grandchildren; and

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina Senate greatly appreciate the dedication and commitment that Maxie Lee Wright Duke showed in serving the people and the State of South Carolina. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Senate:

That the members of the South Carolina Senate, by this resolution, recognize the late Maxie Lee Wright Duke for her significant contributions to the establishment and growth of the Walhalla Performing Arts Center.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to the family of Maxie Lee Wright Duke.

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