

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 71

By Johnson

A RESOLUTION to bring attention to the need for restoration of Hiram Masonic Lodge #7 in Franklin.

WHEREAS, this General Assembly is in large part the guardian of historic treasures throughout this State and recognizes the importance of preserving and protecting the artifacts of our history for Tennessee's posterity; and

WHEREAS, one such historic structure, located at 115 Second Avenue South in Franklin, is the building that houses Hiram Masonic Lodge #7; and

WHEREAS, erected in 1823 for the express purpose of serving as the lodge's Masonic Temple, Hiram Lodge #7 continues serving its inaugural purpose to this day and, thus, it is the oldest continuing lodge in one location in Tennessee, standing as a unique living monument to the history of Freemasonry; and

WHEREAS, Franklin's Masonic Temple is regarded as one of the most significant buildings in the South; it is the oldest example of Gothic Revival architecture in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, it has hosted many distinguished Tennesseans such as Thomas Claiborne, the lodge's first Grand Master, Oliver Bliss Hayes, Benjamin S. Tappan, Andrew Jackson, James Robertson, Guilford Dudley, and Felix Grundy; and

WHEREAS, the Hiram Masonic Lodge #7 building is one of two National Historic Landmarks in Middle Tennessee and, as such, is worthy of distinction and preservation comparable to that of other locations and facilities of treasure to our nation; and

WHEREAS, now 192 years old, the lodge has been declared to be in urgent need of restoration, as the front part of the structure is moving away from the center part, removing vital support and, thus, causing the center part of the structure to squat down onto the age-compromised mortar of the original construction; and

WHEREAS, expert information gleaned in consultations surmises a three-to-five-year window of opportunity for restoration, after which time the loss of this most distinguished landmark will become an imminent possibility; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Carroll Van West, State Historian, Patrick McIntyre, State Historical Commission, and Mary Pearce, Franklin Heritage Foundation, have opined that the Hiram Masonic Lodge #7 building is the number one historical restoration project in Middle Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, there is a pressing need to assemble funds, from both public and private sources, for use in the restoration activities at this historic location; the acquisition of these funds should be pursued in a timely manner; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this body take note of these circumstances concerning the Hiram Masonic Lodge #7 building in Franklin; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that the need for restoration of the Hiram Masonic Lodge #7 building is a noble and worthy aspiration, and this General Assembly supports the efforts to ensure this national historic structure is preserved.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.