

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2022

HOUSE RESOLUTION

EXPRESSING DEEPEST CONDOLENCES TO THE WEIN FAMILY ON THE PASSING OF
GEORGE WEIN

Introduced By: Representatives Shekarchi, Blazejewski, Carson, Abney, Filippi,
Kennedy, Ruggiero, Kislak, Cortvriend, and Fogarty

Date Introduced: January 11, 2022

Referred To: House read and passed

1 WHEREAS, It is with deep sadness that this House has learned of the passing of Mr.
2 George Wein, one of the founders of the Newport Jazz and Folk Festivals and a significant figure
3 within the national and international music scenes for more than half a century; and

4 WHEREAS, Mr. Wein was raised in Newton, Massachusetts, the son of a dentist and a
5 paper products heiress with "passable skills" at the piano. Like many youngsters, he loved music
6 and always remembered the impact attending a Benny Goodman concert had on his life. As a
7 teenager, he had been a musical prodigy who played jazz piano professionally in the Boston area;
8 and

9 WHEREAS, Mr. Wein served our nation with honor during World War II as a member of
10 the United States Army. He was fortunate that Hitler had died and Germany surrendered just as
11 his unit was nearing the frontlines, and that Japan surrendered a few months later as his unit was
12 preparing for transfer to the Pacific for a possible invasion of Japan; and

13 WHEREAS, After the war, Mr. Wein graduated from Boston University and shortly
14 thereafter, started the Storyville Jazz Club and record label in Boston. His company hosted
15 legendary musicians and performers like Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker and Billie Holiday. Mr.
16 Wein had the good fortune to play the piano for a set by Holiday when her regular pianist failed
17 to show up; and

18 WHEREAS, In 1954, Mr. Wein helped create the Newport Jazz Festival, an annual event
19 that would become an iconic part of the American music scene and made him famous within the

1 music industry. The first event was launched under heavy rain with a star-studded line-up that
2 included Dizzy Gillespie, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, and Lester Young. Louis Armstrong
3 attended in 1955 and 1956, and history was made when Duke Ellington's band played a set that
4 featured an incredible 27-chorus solo from saxophonist Paul Gonsalves; and

5 WHEREAS, For more than fifty years, Mr. Wein was in the forefront of a festival that
6 included just about every jazz star along with many other well-known performers such as Frank
7 Sinatra, and later James Brown, Sly and the Family Stone and Led Zeppelin; and

8 WHEREAS, Under the leadership of George Wein and Pete Seeger, the companion
9 Newport Folk Festival was created in 1959, at which Joan Baez and Bob Dylan first came into
10 prominence. Bob Dylan would make history at the Folk Festival in 1965, when he made the
11 controversial decision to play the Festival with an electric band; and

12 WHEREAS, Mr. Wein had an enormous influence on the American musical scene
13 throughout his life. The success of his music festivals in Newport set the template for a wave of
14 musical festivals throughout the United States and around the globe, from Woodstock to the more
15 recent Lollapalooza. Noted music critic, Gene Santoro, observed in 2003 that without Mr. Wein,
16 "everything from Woodstock to Jazz at Lincoln Center might have happened differently – if it
17 happened at all"; and

18 WHEREAS, Mr. Wein was also someone who vigorously opposed racism throughout his
19 entire life. As a teenager, in defiance of his parents, he invited African-American musicians into
20 his home, and in his 20s, he dated an African-American woman, Joyce Alexander, whom he
21 married in 1959, and who would remain his business partner and close advisor until her death in
22 2005. Throughout his life, he worked, socialized, and became friends with countless people, from
23 many different backgrounds and walks of life; and

24 WHEREAS, Mr. Wein leaves a legacy of achievement within Newport and the music
25 industry that will live on forever in the annals of cultural history. He was an even better person
26 than entrepreneur, and will long be remembered by those who knew him as a wonderful friend
27 and a staunch advocate for equality; now, therefore be it

28 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island hereby
29 expresses its deepest condolences to the Wein Family on the passing of Mr. George Wein; and be
30 it further

31 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
32 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to the Wein Family.

=====
LC003507
=====