

---

---

## HOUSE RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING MEKIA KEALAKAI'S BIRTHDAY OF OCTOBER 15 AS ROYAL  
HAWAIIAN TROUBADOURS DAY.

1           WHEREAS, at the dawn of the twentieth century, Hawaiian  
2 string bands tirelessly travelled the circuit of world fairs,  
3 chautauquas, and vaudeville, playing the largest venues of their  
4 day; and

5  
6           WHEREAS, they spread a new Hawaiian style of string driven  
7 ensemble music featuring a synthesis of string, brass, and reed  
8 instruments all played with a virtuosity that has defined and  
9 influenced much of what is now considered to be quintessentially  
10 American music; and

11  
12           WHEREAS, the musical innovations of this generation include  
13 two of the most iconic stringed instruments of the modern era,  
14 the Martin Dreadnought acoustic guitar and Fender Stratocaster  
15 electric guitar; and

16  
17           WHEREAS, after several years of research drawn from public  
18 and private archives, historical societies, personal  
19 correspondence, recordings, oral histories, and collaboration  
20 with the C.F. Martin Guitar Company, groundbreaking research has  
21 surfaced on the life story of Mekia Kealakai, a Native Hawaiian  
22 born into poverty who was the son of a sergeant major in the  
23 Royal Guard; and

24  
25           WHEREAS, like many at-risk youths today, Kealakai found  
26 himself in a reform school for juvenile delinquents at the age  
27 of twelve; and

28  
29           WHEREAS, what could have led to a lifetime of trouble,  
30 instead became a life-changing opportunity through the  
31 mentorship of Royal Hawaiian Band leader Henri Berger, who  
32 introduced him to music; and



1 WHEREAS, as he studied legendary composers in the western  
2 classical tradition, Kealakai became an accomplished student of  
3 theory, harmony, and composition, fusing the Western classical  
4 repertoire with the cosmopolitan traditions of his hometown  
5 Honolulu and creating a new Hawaiian ensemble style along with  
6 his band mates; and

7  
8 WHEREAS, faced with uncertain political times, Kealakai and  
9 musicians of his generation left the islands to share their  
10 unique Hawaiian string band music with audiences throughout the  
11 continental United States and around the world, in time becoming  
12 internationally renowned ambassadors of Hawaiian culture and  
13 music; and

14  
15 WHEREAS, playing to audiences of ever-increasing size,  
16 without the aid of amplification, these young Hawaiian musicians  
17 found themselves at the leading edge of innovation in guitar  
18 design that came to define the sound of modern popular music;  
19 and

20  
21 WHEREAS, Kealakai began collaborating with the C.F. Martin  
22 Guitar Company, the leading manufacturer of acoustic guitars at  
23 the time, and requested they make an extra-large jumbo guitar;  
24 and

25  
26 WHEREAS, that Kealakai model would later become known as  
27 the Dreadnought guitar, the guitar of choice for icons including  
28 Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Gabby Pahinui, the Beatles, and Bob  
29 Marley; and

30  
31 WHEREAS, the Kealakai Center for Pacific Strings has  
32 presented four sold out Sovereign String Band concerts featuring  
33 award winning Hawaiian musicians Aaron Mahi, Raiatea Helm, and  
34 Jeff Peterson, joined by premier artists from the worlds of  
35 classical and opera to bring this historic legacy to life before  
36 contemporary audiences; and

37  
38 WHEREAS, the Kealakai Center for Pacific Strings has  
39 released a compact disc in collaboration with the Library of  
40 Congress of historic Hawaiian string band music from 1904, and  
41 curated a major exhibition for the Bishop Museum, opening in  
42 Spring 2020; and

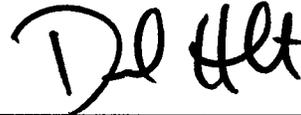


1 WHEREAS, recognition of the Royal Hawaiian Troubadour  
2 generation and their seminal contributions to the musical arts  
3 is long overdue; now, therefore,  
4

5 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the  
6 Thirty-first Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session  
7 of 2021, that this body recognizes Mekia Kealakai's birthday of  
8 October 15 as Royal Hawaiian Troubadours Day; and  
9

10 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this  
11 Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, President of the  
12 Pu'uhonua Society, and Chief Executive Officer of Bishop Museum.  
13  
14  
15

OFFERED BY: \_\_\_\_\_



MAR 12 2021

