

## 2017-J3704

Senate Resolution No. 3704

BY: Senator COMRIE

COMMENDING LL Cool J upon the occasion of his selection as a 2017 Kennedy Center Honors recipient

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to honor and pay tribute to those world renowned artists whose commitment and creative talents have contributed to the entertainment and cultural enrichment of their community and the entire State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commend LL Cool J upon the occasion of his selection as a 2017 Kennedy Center Honors recipient; this momentous occasion was celebrated at its 40th Annual National Celebration of the Arts on Sunday, December 3, 2017; and

WHEREAS, LL Cool J is the first rapper to receive a Kennedy Center Honor, and he is tied with Stevie Wonder as the youngest artist to be honored at the age of 49; and

WHEREAS, American hip hop artist and entertainment icon, LL Cool J has demonstrated staying power in what is often a young man's game; a true pioneer, he helped popularize the genre as one of its first solo superstars; and

WHEREAS, At the age of 16, when most high school students are thinking about prom and learning to drive, James Todd Smith, was releasing his first hit single; and

WHEREAS, Growing up in Queens, New York, James Todd Smith, who would become known to the world as LL Cool J, started rapping at nine years old; two years later, his grandfather bought him a turntable, allowing him to make demo tapes in his attic; and

WHEREAS, During this time, LL Cool J was discovered by another Queens hip hop artist, Jay Philpot, also known as DJ Cut Creator, who was impressed by the young emcee and invited him to perform with him; and

WHEREAS, LL Cool J subsequently received a call from renowned producer Rick Rubin, founder of Def Jam Recordings, and in 1984, he released his first hit single, "I Need a Beat," followed by his first studio album, "Radio," one year later; and

WHEREAS, This extraordinary album was instrumental in establishing LL Cool J, Def Jam, and producer Rick Rubin as legitimate players in the growing hip hop scene; and

WHEREAS, LL Cool J became one of the first rappers to achieve mainstream radio success with both his debut and follow-up 1987 album, "Bigger and Deffer"; and

WHEREAS, With another big breakthrough, the artist's single "I Need Love," reached number one on Billboard's Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs list, and was also one of the first rap songs to break into an international market, garnering mainstream popularity in the United Kingdom; and

WHEREAS, Additionally, "I Need Love" is seen as one of the first hip hop love songs, which allowed LL Cool J to be known for his range, shifting between a street-style battle rap and romantic ballad; and

WHEREAS, To date, LL Cool J has released 13 studio albums, nine of which have gone platinum; he has been nominated for nine Grammy Awards, winning two, and has been the proud recipient of MTV Video Music Awards, NAACP Image Awards, and was recently given a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame; and

WHEREAS, In addition to his illustrious music career, LL Cool J has gone on to star in a number of films including, "Toys" and "Any Given Sunday"; he is also best known for his role on the TV show, "NCIS: Los Angeles," which he has starred in since 2009; and

WHEREAS, This hip hop icon returns with frequent regularity to his hometown in Hollis, Queens, and to surrounding communities, in order to give back his time, support, and love to those who are in need through performances, volunteering, and donations, including his annual Summer-long "Jump & Ball" Tournament; and

WHEREAS, Queens is a community proud to celebrate the accomplishments of its notable citizens, among whom LL Cool J stands out as a legend of the hip hop industry and has not allowed his historic achievements to distract him from remembering and embracing the place and life from whence he came; and

WHEREAS, The arts are the building blocks of civilization, and are central to human expression; they enlighten us and inspire the imagination; individuals which further such worthy purposes richly merit the recognition and appreciation of this Legislative Body and the people of the State of New York; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend LL Cool J upon the occasion of his selection as a 2017 Kennedy Center Honors recipient; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to LL Cool J.