

2017-J5378

Senate Resolution No. 5378

BY: Senator GOLDEN

COMMENDING John Travolta upon the occasion of his designation for special recognition by the Screen Actors Guild

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to honor those American citizens who have distinguished themselves in their profession and whose talent, wit, and charm permeates all they do; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commend John Travolta upon the occasion of his designation for special recognition by the Screen Actors Guild for his role in putting Brooklyn both on the map and in America's hearts with two famous, iconic television and film roles in the late 1970s; this auspicious occasion will be celebrated with an event on Tuesday, June 12, 2018; and

WHEREAS, Over 40 years ago, millions of people across the globe watched John Travolta as he famously ate a double-decker slice of Lenny's pizza as he strutted down 86th Street in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, to the sound of the Bee Gees singing "Whether you're a brother or whether you're a mother, You're stayin' alive, stayin' alive, Feel the city breaking and everybody shaking, And we're stayin' alive, stayin' alive"; and

WHEREAS, Released in 1977, "Saturday Night Fever" starred John Travolta as Tony Manero, a working-class young man who spends his weekends dancing and drinking at a local Brooklyn discotheque; Tony's circle of friends and dancing help him to cope with the harsh realities of his life: a dead-end job, clashes with his unsupportive and squabbling parents, racial tensions in the local community, and his general restlessness; and

WHEREAS, The entire film was shot in the Bay Ridge, Sunset Park and Bensonhurst sections of Brooklyn, and the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge represented Tony Manero's escape to a better life; and

WHEREAS, A huge commercial success, the film significantly helped to popularize disco music around the world and made John Travolta, already well-known from his role on television's "Welcome Back, Kotter" a household name; the "Saturday Night Fever" soundtrack, featuring disco songs by the Bee Gees, is one of the best-selling soundtracks of all time; and

WHEREAS, John Travolta earned his first Oscar and Golden Globe nominations for his portrayal of Tony Manero, and in 2010, "Saturday Night Fever" was deemed "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant" by the Library of Congress and selected for preservation in the National Film Registry; and

WHEREAS, John Travolta also played Sweathog, Vincent "Vinnie" Barbarino on "Welcome Back, Kotter" which aired on ABC from September 9, 1975 through May 17, 1979; the show starred Gabe Kaplan as the title character, Gabe Kotter, a wisecracking teacher who returns to his alma mater, James Buchanan High School in Brooklyn, New York, to teach a racially and ethnically diverse remedial class of Sweathogs; and

WHEREAS, In both of these iconic roles, John Travolta played the quintessential Italian Brooklynite, who was known as a ladies' man; and

WHEREAS, In February of 2017, John Travolta completed the filming of "Gotti" in Brooklyn; the American biographical crime drama film is about the life of New York City Gambino crime family mobster John Gotti and his son; during filming near the corner of Bath and 17th Avenues, New Yorkers were quoting lines from "Saturday Night Fever," energizing the Bath Beach neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, Born on February 18, 1954, John Travolta has starred in numerous other movies throughout his distinguished acting career, some of which include: "Grease," "Urban Cowboy," "Pulp Fiction," "Carrie," "Blowout," "Look Who's Talking," "Michael," "Phenomenon," "Broken Arrow," "Face/Off," and "The General's Daughter,"; in 2005, John reprised the role of Chili Palmer in the "Get Shorty" sequel "Be Cool"; and

WHEREAS, In addition, John Travolta starred opposite Scarlett Johansson in the critically acclaimed independent feature film "A Love Song for Bobby Long," which was screened at the Venice Film Festival, where John and the film won rave reviews; and

WHEREAS, In addition to his nominations for "Saturday Night Fever," John Travolta was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Actor for his performance in "Pulp Fiction"; he won a Golden Globe Award for Best Actor in a Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy for his performance in "Get Shorty" and has received a total of six nominations; and

WHEREAS, In 2016, John Travolta received his first Primetime Emmy Award as a producer of the first season of the anthology series "American Crime Story," subtitled "The People v. O. J. Simpson"; he also

received an Emmy nomination and a Golden Globe nomination for his portrayal of lawyer Robert Shapiro in the series; and

WHEREAS, A generous and compassionate man, John Travolta and his wife, Kelly Preston, founded The Jett Travolta Foundation in honor of their son; this vital organization uses resources, and make grants, for such charitable, literary and educational purposes such as assisting and providing relief to children with vision, hearing, mobility, communication, behavior learning impairments or other special medical, environmental, health or educational needs; and

WHEREAS, John Travolta is a legendary talent who has entertained audiences for several decades; in two of his most iconic roles, Tony Manero and Vinnie Barbarino, he truly captured the essence of late 1970s Brooklyn; and

WHEREAS, When we think about pizza or disco dancing many of us think about Lenny's storefront, and visualize Tony proudly walking down 86th Street on his way to dance the Hustle at the disco; when we hear "Welcome Back" on the 70s channel, we almost see Vinnie's sneer as he tells someone "Up your nose with a rubber hose!"; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that individuals who distinguish themselves in their profession, dedicating themselves to its enhancement and leading it in new directions, are an asset beyond remuneration and cannot be sufficiently extolled; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend John Travolta upon the occasion of his designation for special recognition by the Screen Actors Guild for his role in putting Brooklyn on the map, and to wish him continued success in all his future endeavors; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to John Travolta.