

Senate Resolution 97

By: Senator Harbison of the 15th

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing and commending Paul Pierce upon his retirement; and for other purposes.

2 WHEREAS, after 35 seasons, through which he has played the same part to great acclaim,
3 Paul Pierce has chosen 2023 as the year that he will yield the stage to a new leadership team;
4 and

5 WHEREAS, he is one of the longest-serving theatrical producers in the country with a
6 professional career that has spanned 46 years and more than 500 productions; and

7 WHEREAS, the Springer was a vastly different place when Pierce came to Columbus in
8 1988; in that year, two-thirds of the National Historic Landmark theatre was still in ruins, the
9 bank accounts were nearly empty, there were only three full-time employees, and annual
10 attendance had sagged to fewer than 10,000 admissions; and

11 WHEREAS, by the end of his first season, the Springer finished with a budget surplus, and
12 he then began turning the theatre's focus toward what he considered to be the essential
13 elements of future success, artistic excellence, and audience building; and

14 WHEREAS, with the Springer's new commitment to quality and professionalism, donations
15 and ticket sales surged, which gave Pierce the resources to restructure the organization,
16 assemble a professional team, and attract a cadre of prominent business people and
17 philanthropists to the theatre's board of directors; and

18 WHEREAS, when Pierce arrived, the talent base for Springer shows was small and insular;
19 oftentimes, there were just enough actors at auditions to fill available parts—Pierce insisted
20 that he needed three strong choices for every role in each season and that he was going to
21 start casting a wide net locally, regionally, and nationally; and

22 WHEREAS, by 1995, annual attendance had tripled, professional actors were being hired for
23 every mainstage show, and audiences were traveling from Atlanta, Birmingham, and
24 Montgomery to see Springer productions; however, Pierce recognized that the Springer
25 audience was "graying" and understood that a younger, more diverse audience was essential
26 if the Springer was to survive and thrive; and

27 WHEREAS, after flying to Milwaukee to witness the nation's largest theatre training
28 program for children, which was run by his former classmate, Ron Anderson, Pierce offered
29 Anderson and his family the chance to return to Columbus and integrate his teachings at the
30 Springer; and

31 WHEREAS, by the summer of 1996, Anderson and his family had returned to Columbus,
32 and over the next few years, the energy, youth, and vitality of the Springer Theatre Academy
33 transformed the production's culture, leading to consistent and exemplary growth that has
34 continued to this day; and

35 WHEREAS, Pierce has served with honor and distinction during his tenure at the Springer,
36 and his vision and unyielding commitment to excellence will be sorely missed upon the
37 occasion of his retirement; and

38 WHEREAS, it is abundantly fitting and proper that the outstanding accomplishments of this
39 remarkable and distinguished Georgian be appropriately recognized.

40 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body
41 recognize and commend Paul Pierce for his many wonderful years of service; congratulate
42 him upon the grand occasion of his retirement; and extend the most sincere best wishes for
43 continued health and happiness.

44 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed
45 to make an appropriate copy of this resolution available for distribution to Paul Pierce.