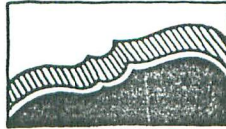


**The
Folklore
Society
of Greater
Washington**

1964-1984



Box 19114
20th Street Station
Washington, DC 20036

Our Twentieth Year

Ms. Kathy Jurado
Subcommittee on Census and Population
U.S. House of Representatives
603 House Annex 1
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Ms. Jurado:

Enclosed is a copy of a letter written by me on behalf of the Folklore Society of Greater Washington, containing our comments on H.R. 1706, the bill designating the square dance as the "national folk dance" of the U.S.

We would appreciate it if a copy of our letter to Rep. Hall be included as part of the record of testimony on H.R. 1706. If you need further information on our organization, or on any of our programs, I would be happy to provide it. You can reach me at my office, 463-2379.

Thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

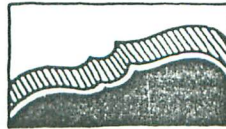
A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathryn Westra Hickerson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Kathryn Westra Hickerson, President
Folklore Society of Greater Washington

Enclosure

The
Folklore
Society
of Greater
Washington

1964-1984



Box 19114
20th Street Station
Washington, DC 20036

Our Twentieth Year

July 25, 1984

Rep. Katie Hall, Chairman
Subcommittee on Census and Population
U.S. House of Representatives
603 HOB Annex 1
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Rep. Hall:

I am writing on behalf of the Folklore Society of Greater Washington (FSGW) to express deep concern over the proposal, currently being considered by your committee, to designate the square dance as the "national folk dance" of the United States.

The Folklore Society is a 20-year-old organization with more than 3000 members in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. As a nonprofit, educational organization, FSGW is dedicated to preserving and promoting the traditional arts--including folk music, dance, crafts, and storytelling. Among the more than 200 community activities we sponsor each year for this purpose are weekly folk dances, and the annual Washington Folk Festival, which features hundreds of performers, many of them representing the diverse folk dance traditions of the area.

If we have learned anything in our 20 years in Washington, it is that folk music and dance--even in this small corner of our huge country--are so diverse that no one form can be singled out as representative. Our own weekly dances frequently feature square dancing, and these dances are among our most popular activities. But at other times, English contra dancing, Scandinavian-inspired "couple turning" dances, Irish step-dancing, or European polkas may take center stage. No one of these dance forms could possibly be designated the Washington folk dance. Even our square dances are as different as the callers and bands who play for them. They are all good; but they are all different.

Similarly, our annual festival highlights the diversity of the folk traditions flourishing right here in our own back yard. While all our performers reside in the Washington area, their songs and dances are as different as their countries of origin. From American Indian ceremonial dances to Spanish-inspired flamenco, and from the ritualized hula dances of Hawaii to the dances of Washington's Latin-American immigrants, we see year after year how many folk dance traditions are alive and well here in the nation's capital. It would be presumptuous to name any one of them the traditional dance of Washington.

Yet H.R. 1706 would designate the square dance as "the national folk dance" (emphasis mine). If so many forms of folk dance flourish here in Washington, D.C., how many more must be represented in communities across the nation? How could we in Washington begin to legislate one of these dances as the official dance of the entire American people?

The proposal outlined in H.R. 1706 fails, in our view, to take into account the fact that this country is a nation of many people and their many folk traditions. While square dance clearly is an important aspect of this country's folk dance heritage, it is not the only important aspect. While square dancing is a shared activity of many Americans, it is not a heritage shared by all. We sincerely hope you will consider these views as you consider H.R. 1706.

Sincerely,



Kathryn Westra Hickerson, President
Folklore Society of Greater Washington

cc: Reps. Mineta, Panetta, Barnard, Boner, Bonker, Brooks, Brown, Corrada, Daub, Dwyer, Emerson, Flippo, Florio, Forsythe, Frenzel, Frost, Hopkins, Horton, Hughes, Jeffords, LaFalce, Lagomarsino, Lantos, McHugh, Martinez, Matsui, Montgomery, Morrison, O'Brien, Ratchford, Reid, Robinson, Roe, Sharp, Shelby, Stangeland, Tallon, Vandergriff, Vento, Waxman, Guarini, and Daniel