



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HCR 36		DATE: 3/11/2026
COMMITTEE: Special Committee on Tourism		
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: JOSEPH CLARKSON		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 3/9/2026 9:15 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.		

I am very much in support of recognizing a local icon



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: TONYA RICE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 3/10/2026 3:02 PM	
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Chair and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Concurrent Resolution 36, recognizing June 3—Josephine Baker’s birthday—as Josephine Baker Day in Missouri.

My name is Tonya Rice, and I am a co-founder of the nonprofit Josephine Baker Centre for Arts and Engagement in St. Louis. I also work at Washington University in St. Louis as Assistant Vice Chancellor for Advocacy & Engagement, though I am testifying in my personal capacity as an advocate for this resolution. The views I express are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of WashU.

I would like to thank Representative Smith for introducing this resolution and for recognizing the importance of honoring Josephine Baker’s legacy in Missouri.

Josephine Baker was born in St. Louis in 1906 and became one of the most internationally known performers of the twentieth century. She was a dancer, singer, and film performer whose talent captivated audiences across Europe and the United States, helping to reshape global views of American culture.

Her legacy extended far beyond the stage. During World War II, Josephine Baker served in the French Resistance, using her international travel and celebrity status to assist Allied intelligence efforts. She was later awarded some of France’s highest honors for her bravery and service. Josephine Baker also played an important role in the American Civil Rights Movement, speaking alongside Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at the 1963 March on Washington.

In 2021, France honored Josephine Baker by inducting her into the Panthéon in Paris, one of the nation’s highest honors. She is the only American-born person to receive that distinction, and she continues to be celebrated internationally as a cultural icon. Josephine Baker is one of the most extraordinary Missourians in history.

Designating June 3 as Josephine Baker Day in Missouri helps remind Missourians that this extraordinary global icon was born in our state. Throughout St. Louis, there is increasing interest among educators, historians, and cultural groups in ensuring that Josephine Baker’s inspiring story continues to be shared with future generations. Members of Josephine Baker’s extended family, including relatives connected to St. Louis and several of her adopted children from around the world – whom she called the “Rainbow Tribe” - have also engaged in helping preserve and share her

remarkable legacy.

From this committee's perspective, there is a meaningful connection to Missouri's cultural and tourism landscape. Worldwide, especially in Europe, Josephine Baker remains a highly recognized cultural figure associated with Missouri. Celebrating her birthday provides an opportunity to connect that international interest to cultural tourism, arts programming, and historical storytelling within the state where she was born. Across the United States, communities have found that honoring historic cultural figures strengthens heritage tourism and highlights the unique stories that define a state.

As Missouri and the nation prepare to celebrate America 250, marking the founding of the United States, there is growing interest in highlighting the stories of Americans whose lives reflect our country's ideals of freedom, courage, and service. Josephine Baker's life also reflects the long-standing friendship between the United States and France, two nations whose shared history—from the American Revolution to the present day—has been shaped by common commitments to liberty and shared values. Her remarkable journey, from St. Louis to international acclaim, stands as a powerful example of that enduring transatlantic bond.

Josephine Baker once said, "I have two loves—my country and Paris." Missouri was where that story began.

Josephine Baker carried the story of Missouri to the world, and recognizing her birthday as Josephine Baker Day allows our state to proudly celebrate one of its most extraordinary daughters.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I respectfully encourage your support of HCR 36.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: ARNIE C. "HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF-STATE PUBLIC ADVOCAT		PHONE NUMBER: 314-440-9000	
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Do you really NEED this Day?			