

Ben E. King was the definition of R&B elegance. King's plaintive baritone had all the passion of gospel; however the settings in which it was displayed with his honey smooth phrasing and crisp enunciation, proved, for perhaps the first time, that R&B could be sophisticated and accessible to pop audiences. King's approach influenced countless smooth soul singers in his wake, and his records were key forerunners of the Motown sound.

On September 28, 1938, King was born under the given name of Benjamin Earl Nelson in Henderson, North Carolina, where he sang with his church choir before the family moved to Harlem in 1947. In junior high, he began performing with a street corner doo wop group called the Four B's, which won second place in an Apollo Theater talent contest. While attending high school, he was offered a chance to join the Moonglows, but was simply too young and inexperienced to stick. He subsequently worked at his father's restaurant as a singing waiter, which led to an invitation to become the baritone singer in a doo wop outfit called the Five Crowns in 1958.

The Five Crowns performed several gigs at the Apollo Theater along with the Drifters, whose career had begun to flounder in the years since original lead singer Clyde McPhatter departed. Drifters manager George Treadwell, dissatisfied with the group members' unreliability and lack of success, fired them all in the summer of 1958 and hired the Five Crowns to assume the name of the Drifters.

The new Drifters toured for about a year, playing to hostile audiences who knew they were a completely different group. In early 1959, they went into the studio with producers Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller to cut their first records. A song Nelson (still performing under his given name) co-wrote called "There Goes My Baby" became his first lead vocal, and the lush backing arrangement made highly unorthodox (in fact, virtually unheard of) use of a string section. "There Goes My Baby" became a massive hit, laying the groundwork for virtually every smooth/uptown soul production that followed. Over the next two years, Nelson sang lead on several other Drifters classics, including "Dance with Me," "This Magic Moment," "Save the Last Dance for Me," and "I Count the Tears."

In 1960, Nelson approached Treadwell about a salary increase and a fairer share of the group's royalties. Treadwell rebuffed him and Nelson quit the group, at this point assuming the more memorable stage name Ben E. King in preparation for a solo career. Remaining on Atlantic, King scored his first solo hit with the stylish, Latin-tinged ballad "Spanish Harlem," a Jerry Leiber/Phil Spector composition that hit the Top Ten in early 1961. The follow-up, "Stand by Me," a heartfelt ode to friendship and devotion co-written by King, became his signature song and an enduring R&B classic; it was also his biggest hit, topping the R&B charts and reaching the pop Top Five.

King scored a few more chart singles through 1963, including velvety smooth pop-soul productions like "Amor," "Don't Play That Song (You Lied)," and the Italian tune "I (Who Have Nothing)." In the post-British Invasion years, King had a rough go of it on the pop charts but continued to score R&B hits. 1967's Southern-fried "What Is Soul?" was one of his last singles for Atco before departing the label in 1969.

In 1975, Atlantic president Ahmet Ertegun caught King's act in a Miami lounge and invited him to re-sign with the label. King scored an unlikely comeback smash with the disco track "Supernatural Thing, Pt. I," which returned him to the top of the R&B charts in 1975 and also reached the pop Top Five. While he was unable to duplicate that single's success, King recorded several more albums for Atlantic up through 1981, and also collaborated with the Average White Band in 1977 on the album *Benny & Us*. After leaving Atlantic a second time, King toured in a version of the Drifters beginning in 1982.

In 1986, "Stand by Me" was prominently featured in the Rob Reiner film of the same name; re-released as a single, it climbed into the Top Ten all over again. In its wake, King returned to solo recording, issuing albums every few years. He also guested on recordings by Heaven 17 and Mark Knopfler, among others. King's 1999 album *Shades of Blue* (on Half Note Records) found him branching out into jazz territory, performing with a big band and guests like Milt Jackson and David "Fathead" Newman.

On March 27, 2012, the Songwriters Hall of Fame announced that "Stand By Me" would receive its 2012 Towering Song Award and that King would be honored with the 2012 Towering Performance Award for his recording of the song. King toured the United Kingdom in 2013 and played concerts in the United States as late as 2014, despite reported health problems. Ben E. King died on April 30, 2015, after a brief illness. King has been covered by acts from several genres and artist including Shirley Bassey, Tom Jones in 1970 and Sylvester. "Till I Can't Get It Anymore" was revisited by peer Ray Charles in 1970 and "Spanish Harlem" was sung by Aretha Franklin in 1971. "Stand by Me" was covered by Otis Redding, John Lennon and Mickey Gilley. King also inspired several rock bands: Siouxsie and the Banshees recorded "Supernatural Thing" in 1981 and Led Zeppelin did a cover version of "Groovin'", more known under the title of "We're Gonna Groove."

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and my distinguished colleagues join me in recognizing Benjamin E. King, and honoring his truly pioneer work, dedication, and great accomplishments; worthy of our Nation's highest artistic and charitable esteem. He is an example of someone who used his raw talent to become a legendary figure, and set the groundwork for many others that followed.

**MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND  
VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RE-  
LATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATION  
ACT, 2016**

SPEECH OF

**HON. RICHARD E. NEAL**

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 17, 2015*

Mr. NEAL. Mr. Speaker, the Church Plan Clarification Act addresses several unintended consequences resulting from the application of general tax and pension regulations to the unique structures of church pension plans. Churches and synagogues established some of the first pension plans in the country, several dating back to the 18th century, and they

are designed to ensure that our clergy and laystaff have adequate resources during their retirement years.

Church plans are often structured to reflect the ecclesiastical teachings of their denomination. The resulting diversity of plan structures, coupled with the complexity of the legal and regulatory framework that applies to church plans, has led to the need for this legislation. The bill would correct several technical issues that are critical to the functioning and operation of church plans and the retirement benefits they provide.

While the corrections contained in PATH Act would be of tremendous help to church plans, I want to make clear that the bill does not affect the definition of "church plan" under the Internal Revenue Code or Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, ERISA. In particular, no inference is intended by this legislation regarding the statutory requirements a pension plan must meet to be considered or treated as a "church plan" under IRC section 414(e) of the Internal Revenue Code and section 3(33) of ERISA, and the bill has no bearing on the interpretation of those sections. Rather, the Church Plan Clarification Act is simply about fixing the rules that govern how church plans operate and serve their participants.

**OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL  
DEBT**

**HON. MIKE COFFMAN**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, December 18, 2015*

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, on January 20, 2009, the day President Obama took office, the national debt was \$10,626,877,048,913.08.

Today, it is \$18,788,138,221,346.49. We've added \$8,161,261,172,243.41 to our debt in 6 years. This is over \$8 trillion in debt our nation, our economy, and our children could have avoided with a balanced budget amendment.

**RECOGNIZING GARY BRACKETT ON  
THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT**

**HON. ADAM SMITH**

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, December 18, 2015*

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor and congratulate Gary Brackett, longtime Business and Political Manager for the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce, on his retirement after nearly four decades of service to the Tacoma-Pierce County community.

The Puget Sound region is home to a large number of military personnel, retirees, and their families. Over the course of Gary's 36 years at the Chamber, his top priority has been to advocate for this community in Pierce County and beyond. When Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM)—and other military installations—faced drastic cuts to its workforce in recent years due to federal budget cuts in defense spending, Gary led local efforts to retain