

## COOPER JOINS FISK JUBILEE SINGERS AT WHITE HOUSE FOR NATIONAL ARTS MEDAL CEREMONY

President and First Lady present  
historic group with prestigious award

NASHVILLE-U.S. Congressman Jim Cooper (D-TN) today joined dignitaries from around the country at the White House for a ceremony honoring the Fisk Jubilee Singers, 2008 winners of a National Medal of the Arts. The Jubilee Singers were among nine recipients of the prestigious award, presented annually by the President and First Lady, along with National Humanities Medals.

"This is a tremendous, well-deserved honor for Fisk University and the Fisk Jubilee Singers," said Cooper, who has cosponsored numerous bills honoring the Jubilee Singers. "Nashville should be proud of the historic accomplishments of this fine group, and I know everyone in Tennessee would have been awe-struck by the beautiful music they made this afternoon at the White House. The President and First Lady, and dozens of their guests, were obviously amazed and inspired."

The National Medal of Arts is the highest award given to artists and arts patrons by the United States Government. The National Medal of Arts is awarded by the President of the United States to individuals or groups who, in his judgment, "...are deserving of special recognition by reason of their outstanding contributions to the excellence, growth, support and availability of the arts in the United States."

Since 1871, the Fisk Jubilee Singers have preserved and performed the sacred African-American spiritual around the world. They have performed for kings and queens and presidents, inspiring

thousands with songs of hope, suffering and praise. In 2007, the Jubilee Singers traveled to Ghana at the invitation of the U.S. Embassy, joining Ghanaians in celebrating the nation's 50th independence anniversary.

Video and audio of today's ceremony, and a transcript of the President's remarks, can be found at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/11/20081117-2.html>.

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RECOGNIZING THE  
AFRICAN AMERICAN SPIRITUAL

AS A NATIONAL  
TREASURE

Remarks in the  
House of Representatives - February 07, 2007

Mr. COOPER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from California for yielding.

I would like to lend my voice and praise of the African American spiritual and a group that I consider to be the leading practitioners of today and for the last 135 years, namely the Fisk Jubilee Singers.

As the Representative from Nashville, Tennessee, I have the honor of representing Fisk University, which, under the able leadership of President Hazel O'Leary, is achieving new heights and excellence.

The Fisk Jubilee Singers have been there since 1871, singing some of the most beautiful music in the world and a music that is laden with a God-given message.

No other music that I am familiar with covers the range from agony to inspiration, from the depths of human misery and despair all the way up to religious bliss. This is remarkable music, and I would suggest to you if you haven't heard the Fisk Jubilee Singers sing it under the able direction of Dr. Paul Kwami, you have not fully lived. This is a truly remarkable group and a remarkable inspirational message.

So let's praise today the anonymous African American genius that has allowed these songs to flourish and survive some of the toughest conditions on our planet, and let's honor groups like the Fisk Jubilee Singers that keep that tradition alive and fresh for each new generation. Yes, Mr. Speaker, this is truly a national treasure. We need to honor and preserve it and spread its wonderful message all around the world. The African American spiritual is part of God's great heritage.

On February 7, 2007, the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed H. Res. 120, a resolution recognizing the African American spiritual as a national treasure.