

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 436

By Clemmons

A RESOLUTION to honor Coach Rick Byrd on the occasion of his retirement.

WHEREAS, the members of this legislative body take great pleasure in paying tribute to one of the greatest college basketball coaches of all time who has expertly led one of the most respected college basketball programs in America for more than three decades; and

WHEREAS, from 1986-2019, Coach Rick Byrd was the heart and soul of Belmont University's men's basketball program and guided the Bruins to unprecedented heights of achievement; and

WHEREAS, Coach Byrd recently announced his retirement after amassing 805 career victories, twelfth all-time among NCAA Division I coaches, for a winning percentage of .667; and

WHEREAS, over the course of thirty-three years, Rick Byrd led Belmont to national prominence and consistent excellence, including eight NCAA Tournament appearances in the last fourteen years and national top twenty-five poll votes eight of the last nine years; he recorded victories over the likes of North Carolina, UCLA, Marquette, Cincinnati, Alabama, Georgia, Vanderbilt, Missouri, Stanford, and Butler and claimed Belmont's first ever NCAA Tournament win in 2019 with a victory over Temple; and

WHEREAS, he led Belmont to seventeen OVC or Atlantic Sun conference championships (ten regular season, seven tournament), and his career conference winning percentage of .797 (447-114) ranks second in NCAA Division I history; and

WHEREAS, for programs with at least six decades of history, Coach Byrd retires first among NCAA Division I head coaches when ranked by percentage of schools' all-time wins, accounting for a staggering 62.4 percent of Belmont's total victories; and

WHEREAS, under his inspired leadership, the Bruin program achieved and sustained excellence as one of only nine NCAA Division I programs to win nineteen or more games during each of the last fourteen seasons; from 2011-2014, he was one of only six coaches to lead his team to twenty-six victories each season; and

WHEREAS, five of his Belmont players earned Associated Press All-America recognition, Adam Sonn, Alex Renfroe, Ian Clark, J.J. Mann, and Evan Bradds, and another, Kerron Johnson, was a two-time first team all-conference selection; and

WHEREAS, Coach Byrd worked with the Belmont administration to create an athletic culture that prioritizes "developing attitudes and skills for living a life of integrity, humility, and service to others" and establish an unparalleled standard of academic achievement among NCAA Division I programs, an accomplishment that is of greater significance to him than his many triumphs on the court; and

WHEREAS, since 2001, Belmont has led the nation in Academic All-America selections with seventeen and is one of only three programs to rank among the nation's best every year since inception of the Academic Progress Rate; and

WHEREAS, Belmont has posted a team grade point average of 3.0 or higher eighteen consecutive years and claimed the "Academic National Championship" on InsiderHigherEd.com each of its last three NCAA Tournament appearances; and

WHEREAS, since the Bruins began competing in NCAA Division I, every Belmont player who completed his eligibility under Coach Byrd's watch earned his degree; and

WHEREAS, Rick Byrd served as chairman of the NCAA Men's Basketball Rules Committee from 2013-2015 and was instrumental in instituting sweeping changes to improve the pace of play; and

WHEREAS, he has received accolades literally too numerous to mention for his myriad accomplishments as a basketball coach and mentor of young men; in addition to winning fourteen district or conference coach of the year awards, Coach Byrd was honored as NAIA

National Coach of the Year in 1995 and Hugh Durham National Coach of the Year in 2011 and received the Dr. James Naismith National Sportsmanship Award in 1994; and

WHEREAS, Rick Byrd received the 2012 NCAA Bob Frederick Award for his lifelong commitment to sportsmanship, ethical conduct, and fair play; his Belmont squads have earned the OVC Team Sportsmanship Award four of the last seven years; and

WHEREAS, he began his brilliant career as a head basketball coach at Maryville College and then transferred to Lincoln Memorial University, where he posted a .711 winning percentage and led his team to three NAIA playoff berths in three years; and

WHEREAS, a native of Knoxville, Rick Byrd was an honors student at the University of Tennessee, earning a bachelor's degree in physical education in 1976 and a master's degree in physical education in 1977; and

WHEREAS, his many professional achievements aside, he is fortunate to share love and companionship with his wife, Cheryl; two daughters, Andrea and Megan; a stepson, Robert Duke; and a brand new grandson, Grant; and

WHEREAS, over the course of forty-plus years, Rick Byrd has earned the respect and admiration of his colleagues and sports fans across the nation as a great basketball coach, tactician, and leader of young men, and he should be recognized on this special occasion; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and commend Coach Rick Byrd for his incomparable record-setting career at Belmont University, praise his many contributions to college basketball and the growth and maturation of hundreds of young men, and extend to him our best wishes for every success and happiness during his retirement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.