

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 743

By Terry

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Coach Kermit Davis and the members of the Middle Tennessee State University Blue Raiders men's basketball team.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly salute those collegiate athletes who, through their extraordinary efforts, have distinguished themselves as true champions of whom we all can be proud; and

WHEREAS, the members of the Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) Blue Raiders basketball team and Head Coach Kermit Davis have proven themselves to be the fiercest of competitors and, as such, deserving of the highest regard, as they recently won the 2016 Conference USA (C-USA) Basketball Tournament and earned a bid to the Big Dance, the NCAA Men's Tournament, which will crown the national champion; and

WHEREAS, during the early season, the Blue Raiders racked up big wins against Toledo, Auburn, and Belmont before settling down to conference play; and

WHEREAS, in Conference USA competition, MTSU finished 13-5 and in second place, with an overall record of 21-9; and

WHEREAS, in the Conference USA Tournament in Birmingham, the Blue Raiders bested Charlotte 79-61 and Marshall 99-90 to advance to the championship game; and

WHEREAS, in the title game, C-USA Tournament MVP Reggie Upshaw hit two clutch free throws with 2.9 seconds remaining to lift MTSU over Old Dominion 55-53; and

WHEREAS, Giddy Potts, MTSU's leading scorer for the season, put up 14 points before fouling out, and Darnell Harris scored 10 points; and

WHEREAS, in addition to Reggie Upshaw's designation as MVP for his last-second heroics, MTSU's Perrin Buford was named to the All-Tournament team; and

WHEREAS, this C-USA title marks the first conference championship for Coach Davis; the Blue Raiders were last selected for the NCAA Tournament as an at-large bid from the Sun Belt Conference in 2013; and

WHEREAS, facing off against powerful Michigan State in the first round of the NCAA Tournament in St. Louis, MTSU pulled off one of the biggest upsets in the history of the Big Dance and recorded perhaps the greatest victory in Blue Raider history as they won their seventh straight game; and

WHEREAS, MTSU led the entire game, made several clutch shots, and throttled the mighty Michigan State Spartans 90-81 to become only the eighth 15-seed to beat a 2-seed since the NCAA Tournament expanded to sixty-four teams in 1985, while 116 15-seeds have lost in that matchup; and

WHEREAS, the Blue Raiders were not intimidated by the Spartans' formidable reputation and talent, and played Michigan State toe to toe for forty minutes; the stunning victory was truly a team effort, with Reggie Upshaw scoring 21 points, Giddy Potts putting up 19 points, Darnell Harris and Perrin Buford each scoring 15 points, and Jaqawn Raymond adding 11 points; and

WHEREAS, after taking a few hours to celebrate amid the noise of brackets bursting nationwide, the Blue Raiders faced off against Syracuse in the second round and put out a valiant effort, but they did not ultimately emerge victorious; and

WHEREAS, nevertheless, MTSU won an NCAA Tournament game that the experts gave them no chance of winning, once again proving the tenacity, perseverance, and spirit of the underdog that make March Madness so entertaining, and finished the season at 25-10; and

WHEREAS, the members of the MTSU Blue Raiders epitomize all that is good in today's student athlete, as they have achieved a premier level of success in competition while exhibiting the highest degree of character in all aspects of life; and

WHEREAS, the perseverance, determination, work ethic, and talent of this group of young men not only made possible a championship season, but also surely bode well for their future success; and

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly find it appropriate to acknowledge and applaud the members of the MTSU Blue Raiders basketball team for their outstanding performance and for serving as examples of the exceptional quality of the youth of Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and commend Coach Kermit Davis and the members of the Middle Tennessee State University Blue Raiders basketball team upon winning the Conference USA Tournament, congratulate the team on their history-making and awe-inspiring victory against Michigan State in the NCAA Tournament, and extend to them our best wishes for much continued success next season.

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