

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 11

By Henry

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Mr. Roy Skinner,  
legendary basketball coach of the Vanderbilt  
Commodores.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Roy Skinner, one of the most beloved and renowned coaches in the history of collegiate basketball; and

WHEREAS, the winningest men's basketball coach in Vanderbilt history, Roy Skinner's legendary tenure as leader of the Commodores saw the birth of "Memorial Magic", the integration of athletic competition in the Southeastern Conference, and the establishment of a standard of excellence and winning tradition at Vandy that continues today; and

WHEREAS, a native son of Paducah, Kentucky, Roy Skinner developed a passion for the game of basketball as a young man that would see him eventually enroll at Paducah Junior College to continue his education and play basketball; and

WHEREAS, a standout on the basketball team, he would finish his collegiate career at Presbyterian College in South Carolina before returning to Paducah to begin his legendary coaching career at the helm of his alma mater, Paducah Junior College; and

WHEREAS, while attending a basketball coaching class at George Peabody College taught by Vanderbilt Head Coach Bob Polk, Skinner was able to arrange a game between his Paducah Junior College cagers and the Vandy freshman team of 1956-57 that featured a player from nearby Paducah; and

WHEREAS, Skinner's cagers handed Vandy's squad what would be their only loss that season; Coach Polk quickly pursued the young coach to fill an assistant coaching job, which he accepted several months later; and

WHEREAS, assigned to coach the freshman team, attend high school games to scout prospects and recruit future players, Roy Skinner showed he was up to the job, but was faced

with an even greater challenge his second season when he was named acting head coach after Coach Polk suffered a heart attack; and

WHEREAS, displaying a wealth of basketball knowledge and game experience beyond his years, Roy Skinner led Vanderbilt to a winning season, posting a 14-10 overall record and a 8-6 record in SEC play in 1958-59 as he encouraged his players to have fun and play hard; and

WHEREAS, named head coach two years later when Coach Polk stepped down, Roy Skinner would truly embark on an illustrious collegiate coaching career that would establish him as the winningest coach in Vanderbilt history; and

WHEREAS, leading the Commodores from 1961 through 1976, Coach Roy Skinner would compile a record of 278 wins against 135 losses, pick up four SEC Coach of the Year awards, and guide Vandy teams to top-10 national rankings in seven different seasons; and

WHEREAS, Skinner's teams established "Memorial Magic" at Vanderbilt's historic Memorial Gymnasium, defeating opposing teams with fantastic finishes and notching signature victories such as the thunderous defeat of Kentucky in 1964 when it was ranked Number One in the nation; and

WHEREAS, the legend of Coach Roy Skinner also lies beyond the statistics of collegiate athletics, as he built a program that excelled in producing winning teams by recruiting and developing quality players whose grit and tenacity matched their coach – he respected and supported them and they in turn were deeply loyal to him, playing their hearts out every game; and

WHEREAS, among Coach Skinner's storied players was the All-American Clyde Lee of Nashville's David Lipscomb High School who still holds all of Vanderbilt's rebounding records; Vanderbilt would win its first SEC championship in 1964-65 with Lee playing center as the team compiled a record of 24-4 with a tally of 15 wins against only one loss in SEC play; and

WHEREAS, resolute and undaunted by the opposing voices of the day, in 1966 Roy Skinner successfully recruited and signed Perry Wallace from Nashville's Pearl High School, thus integrating the Southeastern Conference with its first African-American basketball player; and

WHEREAS, recruiting student-athletes who could compete in the classroom at Vanderbilt as well as on the hardwood, Coach Skinner's squads were cohesive units committed

to quality basketball and realizing their optimum potential on the court, thus producing a team-first attitude and winning seasons; and

WHEREAS, among the many outstanding Commodores players to have worn the black and gold under Coach Skinner are such legends as Tom Hagan, Bob "Snake" Grace, John Russell, John Ed Miller, Jerry Southwood, Thorpe Weber, Bo Wyenandt, Bill Ligon, Kenny Gibbs, Rudy Thacker, Keith Thomas, Terry Compton, Rod Freeman, Jan Van Breda Koff, and the storied "F Troop" of Jeff Fosnes, Joe Ford, Lee Fowler, and Butch Feher; and

WHEREAS, with his strong work ethic and dedication, Coach Skinner established himself as one of the preeminent figures in men's basketball, and basketball purists throughout the country proclaimed his fundamental coaching system to be a proven winner; and

WHEREAS, during his lifetime, Coach Roy Skinner won the respect and admiration of his peers in the coaching ranks, the devotion of his players, and the hearts of countless Vanderbilt Commodore fans across the nation; and

WHEREAS, a truly special gentleman, Roy Skinner should be remembered for his integrity, his loyalty to his family and friends, and his personal courage, which never failed in his battle with cancer; and

WHEREAS, deeply devoted to his family, Mr. Skinner is survived by his wife, Nathleene; his five children: son and daughter-in-law Kim and Shirley Skinner, daughter Chris Fox, son Joe Skinner, son and daughter-in-law Tapp and Jackie Skinner, and daughter and son-in-law Dea and Dan Johnson; and his eight grandchildren: Gray, David, Steven, Austin, Kayla, Nicole, Sarah, and Wendy; and

WHEREAS, Roy Skinner leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, seldom do gentlemen of his stature walk among us, and it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life and legacy of the legendary Roy Skinner; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Roy Skinner, reflecting fondly upon his

impeccable character, illustrious coaching career, and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Skinner.

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