

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 1297

By Walley

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend the players and coaches of the Freed-Hardeman University Lions upon winning the 2024 NAIA Men's Basketball Championship.

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

WHEREAS, one such exemplary group of young men is the Freed-Hardeman University Lions, whose players have proven themselves to be the fiercest of competitors and truly worthy of admiration by winning the 2024 NAIA Men's Basketball Championship; and

WHEREAS, the Lions were 10-2 in Mid-South Conference play and posted an outstanding 26-4 record during the regular season; and

WHEREAS, Freed-Hardeman then captured the Mid-South Conference Tournament crown with victories over Campbellsville and Georgetown; and

WHEREAS, entering the 2024 NAIA Men's Basketball Championship as a No. 1 seed, the Lions roared to a first-round victory over Loyola (La.) by a score of 79-56 and dominated Point Park (Pa.) 84-67 in the second round to reach the finals site in Kansas City, Missouri; and

WHEREAS, in the round of 16, Freed-Hardeman snuck by The Master's (Calif.) 69-68 and then defeated Central Baptist (Ark.) 85-74 in the fourth round to advance to the Final Four; and

WHEREAS, the Lions bested Grace (Ind.) 86-81 in the semifinals, and suddenly the NAIA championship was clearly in their sights; and

WHEREAS, in the championship game, Freed-Hardeman was trailing by 6 points with 1 minute remaining when they made a miraculous comeback, forcing a flurry of turnovers and

scoring the final 10 points of the contest to prevail 71-67 and bring the 2024 NAIA Men's Basketball Championship trophy home to Henderson; and

WHEREAS, Freed-Hardeman starters Quan Lax, Hunter Scurlock, and JJ Wheat were named to the All-Tournament team; and

WHEREAS, JJ Wheat was honored with the Charles Stevenson Hustle Award, and Hunter Scurlock ended his illustrious collegiate career as the Chuck Taylor Most Valuable Player of the tournament; and

WHEREAS, each Freed-Hardeman player contributed significantly to the overall success of the team and is worthy of our approbation; and

WHEREAS, the Lions' superb performance would not have been possible without the stellar leadership of Coach Drew Stutts and the unfailing support of their families, their fans, and the Freed-Hardeman community; and

WHEREAS, the players of the Freed-Hardeman University Lions epitomize all that is good in today's student athletes, 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 national championship 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 Freed-Hardeman University Lions for their championship season on the hardwood; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor and commend the players and coaches of the Freed-Hardeman University Lions upon winning the 2024 NAIA Men's Basketball

Championship while posting a 32-4 overall record and extend to them our best wishes for every continued success in all their future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.