



State of Tennessee

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 651

By Senators Tracy, Ford

and

Representative Evans

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate James "Boots" Donnelly upon his induction into the College Football Hall of Fame.

WHEREAS, this General Assembly is pleased to pay tribute to one of the finest athletes and most accomplished football coaches the State of Tennessee has ever produced, namely Middle Tennessee State University's (MTSU's) own James "Boots" Donnelly; and

WHEREAS, Coach Donnelly was inducted into the National Football Foundation's (NFF's) College Football Hall of Fame in August 2013, thus earning distinction as the first person in MTSU history to be so honored; and

WHEREAS, in receiving this rare honor, Coach Donnelly joined only 934 players and 205 coaches who have been inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame from among the nearly 4.92 million who have played or coached the game over the past 144 years, or a mere .0002%; and

WHEREAS, Coach Donnelly is now enshrined among the august company of other football legends who have been inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame from the divisional ranks, including Terry Bradshaw, Walter Payton, John Randle, Jerry Rice, and Coach Eddie Robinson; and

WHEREAS, a native of Nashville who played defensive back at MTSU from 1962 to 1964, Boots Donnelly was a member of the 1964 Blue Raider team that won a conference championship and the Grantland Rice Bowl; and

WHEREAS, he later served as athletic director for three years at his alma mater and played an integral role in moving MTSU to the Football Bowl Subdivision level; and

WHEREAS, Coach Donnelly began his illustrious head coaching career at Austin Peay State University (APSU) and transformed a program that had never won a football championship into Ohio Valley Conference (OVC) champions in his first season on the job; and

WHEREAS, after two seasons and a 14-7 record at APSU, he departed for his alma mater; he served as the Blue Raiders' head football coach for the next twenty years and led MTSU to unprecedented success on the gridiron; and

WHEREAS, Coach Donnelly piloted MTSU to nine Top 20 regular-season finishes, seven NCAA I-AA playoff appearances, and a 31-game home winning streak between 1987-1993; and

WHEREAS, the Blue Raiders won or shared the Ohio Valley Conference title five times during his tenure, and he was named the OVC Coach of the Year four times; he is the only coach in OVC history to win a conference title at two different schools; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to awards and accolades, Coach Donnelly received the NFF Middle Tennessee Chapter's 1989 Outstanding Contribution to Amateur Football Award; he is a member of the organization's board of directors, which is instrumental in fundraising for scholarships; and

WHEREAS, he has also been inducted into the Blue Raider Hall of Fame and the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, Coach Donnelly gives back to his community by serving as chief executive officer of the Backfield in Motion organization, which combines academics and athletics to inspire inner-city boys to reach their maximum potential; and

WHEREAS, Boots Donnelly is a legendary athlete and coach who has attained the apex of college football, and he should be recognized on this auspicious occasion; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor and congratulate James "Boots" Donnelly upon his induction into the National Football Foundation's College Football Hall of Fame, commend him upon his outstanding career at MTSU and beyond, and extend our best wishes for much continued success and happiness.

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

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ADOPTED: March 20, 2014



RON RAMSEY
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE



BETH HARWELL, SPEAKER
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APPROVED this 26th day of March 2014



BILL HASLAM, GOVERNOR