

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 181

By Ford

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Larry Finch of Memphis.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Larry Finch, one of the most accomplished and beloved figures in the history of the University of Memphis athletics; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Finch served with acumen and alacrity as head coach of the University of Memphis Tigers men's basketball team for many years, in which position he earned the respect of his players, his coaching peers, and Tigers fans across the nation for the exemplary quality of his work; and

WHEREAS, he will be long remembered for his many accomplishments as the head coach of the University of Memphis men's basketball team, but even more so for his career on the hardwood for the Tigers, during which he led the team to its first NCAA Final Four appearance in 1973; and

WHEREAS, a beloved son of Memphis, Larry Finch grew up in the Orange Mound community, where he attended Melrose High School and starred on the basketball court for the Golden Wildcats before accepting a scholarship to attend what was then known as Memphis State University; and

WHEREAS, taking the Memphis Tigers to the championship game of the NCAA tournament in his senior year, Larry Finch scored twenty-nine points in the finals in an unsuccessful bid to defeat the storied UCLA Bruins and Coach John Wooden; and

WHEREAS, a highly-skilled guard who scored 1,869 points for the Tigers and graduated as the all-time leading scorer in school history, Mr. Finch saw his jersey retired by his alma mater in 1974; and

WHEREAS, in 1973, Larry Finch was drafted by the Los Angeles Lakers of the National Basketball League and would go on to play for the Memphis Tams of the American Basketball League; and

WHEREAS, entering the coaching ranks at the end of his professional career, Mr. Finch became the University of Memphis head coach in 1986 and would go on to post ten of eleven winning seasons, seven twenty-plus win seasons, and six NCAA tournament appearances during his tenure; and

WHEREAS, recruiting and developing such legendary basketball players as Elliot Perry, Penny Hardaway, and Lorenzen Wright, Coach Finch saw his 1991-92 team, led by Hardaway and David Vaughn, advance to the Elite Eight of the NCAA tournament; and

WHEREAS, as the Tigers' head coach from 1986 to 1997, Coach Finch compiled an exemplary record of 220 wins against 130 losses and helped the University of Memphis retain its ranking as one of the elite programs of men's college basketball; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to awards and accolades, Mr. Finch was given the Lifetime Achievement Award by the University of Memphis Black Student Association in 2005 and, on Martin Luther King Day in 2003, he was recognized in a special ceremony at the University of Memphis and escorted onto the court by NBA Hall of Famer Bill Russell; and

WHEREAS, in 2000, the University of Memphis named the Tigers' practice facility after Coach Larry Finch, an honor most appropriate for perhaps the greatest Tiger in the history of University of Memphis basketball; and

WHEREAS, Larry Finch was also deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Finch enjoyed the loving companionship of his devoted wife, Vickie Finch, and was the proud father of three children, Shanae, James, and Larry, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, Larry Finch 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, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; 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 Larry Finch, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character 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. Finch.

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