

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 464

By Ford

A RESOLUTION to honor the students, faculty, and staff of Booker T. Washington High School upon its historic 2011 commencement address by President Barack Obama.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to specially recognize those high schools that, through their unflagging commitment to excellence, seek to create and maintain an educational environment in which the students of this State can thrive, bringing national acclaim and recognition to the State of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, such an exemplary high school is Booker T. Washington High School in Memphis, which was recently personally selected by President Barack Obama as the winner of the 2011 Race to the Top High School Commencement Challenge; and

WHEREAS, as the winning high school, the graduating Class of 2011 at Booker T. Washington High School enjoyed the prestigious honor of having President Barack Obama as their commencement speaker for their graduation; and

WHEREAS, competing against high schools across the Nation, Booker T. Washington High School was one of six national finalists selected to participate in a public, on-line voting round of the contest that saw over 100,000 individual voters view student-produced videos and short essays about their school; and

WHEREAS, receiving support from across Tennessee and throughout the Nation, Booker T. Washington High School advanced to the final round of the competition, needing only one more vote to win – that of the President of the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, on May 10, 2011, the White House announced that President Barack Obama had chosen Booker T. Washington High School as the 2011 Race to the Top High

School Commencement Challenger winner and that he would be traveling to Memphis to speak at their 2011 graduation commencement; and

WHEREAS, in his selection announcement, President Obama said, "Booker T. Washington High School proves what can be accomplished when students, teachers, parents, and administrators come together to support achievement in the classroom..."; and

WHEREAS, Booker T. Washington High School's mission is for all students to become equipped with the intellectual, technological, and social skills that will allow them to exceed the expectations of State and National standards; and

WHEREAS, Memphis' oldest high school created for African-American students during segregation, Booker T. Washington High School graduated two generations of African-American leaders who led the fight for civil rights both in Memphis and nationally; and

WHEREAS, tragically, the academic fortunes of Booker T. Washington High School deteriorated as the neighborhood declined and local public housing became, according to an editorial in *The Commercial Appeal*, centers of generational poverty, hopelessness, and crime – all factors that hurt children's educational attainment; and

WHEREAS, taking on the challenge, Principal Alisha Kiner and the students of Booker T. Washington High School are changing that dynamic and have made impressive gains in student scores on statewide exams and student graduation rates, which have gone from 60.4% in 2009 to 81.6% in 2010; and

WHEREAS, the faculty, staff, and administration have devoted countless hours and utilized their invaluable talents in an effort to make Booker T. Washington High School a beacon of excellence in the educational community of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, the students of the 2011 graduating class are: Valedictorian Alexis Wilson, Salutatorian Vashti Taylor, and Honors graduates Shaniqua Henderson, Kenneth Roberson, Cassandra Henderon, Michelle Tucker, Charlesa Gray, Khadijah Kalahiki-Smith, Brittany Johnson, Arnisha Taylor, Jonecia Haynes, Marneisha Hull, Aramis Higgins, and Jaquila Banks; and

WHEREAS, talented members of the 2011 class include: Shameka Adams, Isiah Anthony, Gregory Avant, Michael Balwin, Gerald Banks, Bobby Barrett, Jerica Benson, Mircale

Bills, Chantrice Booker, Jerome Brantley, Adrian Brown, DeAngelo Brown, Martavious Brown, Terrillious Burns, William Cain, David Carroll, Ricky Coats, Jeremy Cooper, Jerrod Cox, Daeisha Crump, Antoneisha Dandridge, Christopher Dean, Gregory Dees, Jonathan Dodson, Trinika Farmer, Taurdarius Fleming, Tishirra Fox, Tajaylan Frison, and Tajerron Frison; and

WHEREAS, the 2011 graduating class includes: Markiela Givance, Sandria Givance, Laquita Gordan, Lamarcus Grandberry, Jalesa Gray, Demario Green, Fredrika Graham, Chandrecka Griggs, Keosha Griggs, Charlie-Jean Hale, Auredious Hardin, Chiquita Hardin, LaPorche Harrell, LaQuaris Harris, LaDarius Hatton, Kiara Hawthorne, Ma'Lik Henderson, Demetrius Holmes, Mikia Hughes, Romerick Humphrey, Derrick Jackson, Nephaterea Jackson, Reginald Jenkins, Angela Johnson, Audre Johnson, and Derrick Johnson; and

WHEREAS, the 2011 class also includes: Jasmine Johnson, Jerrika Johnson, Rickita Johnson, Willie Wilson, Carolyn Jones, Derrick Jones, Dontario Jones, Jennifer Jones, Jerri Jones, Joshua Jones, Tony Jones, Alvertis King, Gabrielle Lee, Darrien Little, Jasmine Mackie, Kingson Macon, Marquis Macon, Jasmine Malone, Derrick Martin, Angela Mason, Phyllis McGhee, Markeshia McKinney, Precious Merritt, Tony Mickens, Quanneva Mitchell, CedKeisha Moore, Eron Jackson, Gregory Mosley, Ayana Muhammad, Sertoya Nicklos, and Chelsea Parker; and

WHEREAS, other members of the 2011 class are: Leonika Parker, Ray Parker, Darrius Partee, Toni Patterson, Tadarius Payne, Lakeisha Pinkins, Shaquella Powell, Jalisa Powers, Christopher Redmond, Seth Reed, Rikita Roberson, Ricky Roberts, Cortavius Robertson, Nichele Rogers, Catron Roland, Nathan Rollins, Jarius Roosevelt, Cortavius Sanders, Erica Sandrers, Maya Scott, Tarvaris Shegog, Jessica Shinault, Brian Simmons, Jemilra Simms, Lucie Slater, Jasmine S. Smith, Jasmine D. Smith, Royal Smith and Dorcheryl Tate; and

WHEREAS, additional members of the 2011 class include: Leslie Tate, Teira Taylor, Tiesha Taylor, Dion Thomas, Dunterious Traylor, MarKeshia Tuggers, Marilyn Turner, Bob Upchurch, T'Keyah Vance, Jarice Wallace, Desmond Weddle, Christy Wells, Mikiesha White, Sherry Wilkins, Asia Williams, Kadarius Williams, Trumonika Williams, Earl Wilson, Kenzedrick Wilson, Andrea Winters, Ashley Woodard, and Cortez Woodley; and

WHEREAS, such a once in a lifetime opportunity, to host the President of the United States of America, was truly an inspirational and memorable event for the Booker T. Washington High School Class of 2011 and for all their fellow students in attendance; 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 and congratulate Booker T. Washington High School upon being selected by President Barack Obama as the winner of the 2011 Race to the Top High School Commencement Challenge and extend our best wishes to Principal Alisha Kiner, the students, faculty, staff, and administration of Booker T. Washington High School.

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