

By: Senator(s) Jordan, Branning, Butler
(38th), England, Horhn, McDaniel, Norwood,
Simmons (13th), Thomas

To: Rules

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 18

1 A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE DEEPEST SYMPATHY OF THE
2 LEGISLATURE ON THE PASSING OF LUSIA "LUCY" HARRIS OF MINTER CITY,
3 MISSISSIPPI, AND REMEMBERING HER LEGACY AS A PIONEER OF WOMEN'S
4 BASKETBALL ON THE OCCASION OF THE PREMIER OF THE DOCUMENTARY FILM
5 *THE QUEEN OF BASKETBALL* RELEASED IN HER HONOR.

6 WHEREAS, it is with sadness that we note the passing of Lusia
7 "Lucy" Harris, a Mississippi sports legend, on January 18, 2022;
8 and

9 WHEREAS, Lusia "Lucy" Harris was considered to be one of the
10 pioneers of women's basketball and was one of the greatest women's
11 basketball players. As a dominating center, she won three
12 National Titles and scored the first basket in the first Olympic
13 Competition for women in 1976. Lucy was the first and only Black
14 woman to be drafted to the NBA (before the WNBA existed) courtesy
15 of the New Orleans Jazz. In 1992, Lucy became the first Black
16 woman to be inducted into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame;
17 and

18 WHEREAS, Lucy Harris was born on February 10, 1955, in Minter
19 City, Mississippi, to Ethel and Willie Harris, a homemaker and



20 vegetable farmer, respectively. She is the tenth of eleven
21 children and the fourth of five daughters. Lucy and her siblings
22 attended Amanda Elzy High School in Greenwood, Mississippi, where
23 she won the Most Valuable Player Award in basketball for three
24 consecutive years, 1971 to 1973. Lucy served as Team Captain and
25 made the State All-Star Team. Lucy scored a school record 46
26 points in one game and led her school to the State Tournament in
27 Jackson, Mississippi; and

28 WHEREAS, after graduating from high school in 1973, Lucy
29 attended Delta State University. During her freshman year there,
30 she led the Delta State Women's Basketball Team to a 16-2 record.
31 The following year, Lucy led Delta State in a 90-81 victory over
32 Immaculata University in Immaculata, Pennsylvania, to win the
33 National Championship in Women's Basketball NCAA Division III.
34 Lucy led the team with 32 points and 16 rebounds. In the
35 1975-1976 season, Delta State and Immaculata met again in the
36 National Tournament Final, and Lucy led Delta State with 30 points
37 and 18 rebounds in a 69-64 victory over Immaculata; and

38 WHEREAS, Delta State returned to the National Tournament
39 Final in 1977, where she scored 23 points and 16 rebounds and led
40 her team in defeating Louisiana State University 68-55, for Delta
41 State's third consecutive title. Lucy finished her college career
42 with 2,981 points and 1,662 rebounds, averaging 25.9 points and
43 14.5 rebounds per game. Lucy was named as the tournament's Most
44 Valuable Player (MVP) and to the All-American First Team during



45 Delta State's three winning seasons. Lucy graduated from Delta
46 State University with a Bachelor's Degree in Health, Physical
47 Education, and Recreation in 1977; and

48 WHEREAS, Lucy also played on the United States Women's
49 Basketball Team, which won Gold in the 1975 Pan American Games and
50 Silver in the 1976 Summer Olympic Games in Montreal, Canada; and

51 WHEREAS, Lucy married George E. Stewart on February 4, 1977.
52 The couple has two sons and twin daughters; and

53 WHEREAS, Lucy was chosen in the seventh round of the 1977 NBA
54 draft by the New Orleans Jazz (now Utah Jazz), becoming only the
55 second woman ever drafted by an NBA team. However, the NBA voided
56 their first selection, thus making Lucy the first and so far the
57 only woman ever officially drafted. Lucy declined to try out for
58 the Jazz because she was pregnant at the time. She played
59 professional basketball briefly in the 1979-1980 season with the
60 Houston (Texas) Angels of the Women's Professional Basketball
61 League (WBL); and

62 WHEREAS, after her basketball career ended, Lucy returned to
63 Delta State to earn her Master's Degree in Education in 1984. In
64 1992, Harris and former player, Nera White, became the first two
65 women ever inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of
66 Fame. She was the first African American woman inductee. Harris
67 was also inducted into to the Woman's Basketball Hall of Fame and
68 the International Woman's Sports Hall of Fame; and



69 WHEREAS, in *The Queen of Basketball*, a short documentary that
70 premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in June 2021, Ben Proudfoot
71 tells Lucy's story. The documentary team digitized nearly 10,000
72 film negatives and 16,000 feet of film to reveal why Lucy was
73 unstoppable on the court. She averaged 25.9 points and 14.4
74 rebounds per game and graduated with 15 Delta State team,
75 single-game and career records. She also led her Alma Mater to a
76 109-6 record; and

77 WHEREAS, Shaquille O'Neal, the former Laker great, got on
78 board as the Executive Producer when he heard Lucy's story. "I
79 want to honor Miss Harris, you know, by helping her story get out
80 to the world," said O'Neal. "I had no idea who she was and I like
81 to consider myself a basketball aficionado." O'Neal said he was
82 inspired by Harris' story because of all the things that she had
83 to endure. "She made it possible for women to be able to do what
84 they have done today"; and

85 WHEREAS, Lucy Harris was a champion whose staggering
86 statistics are now becoming recognized years later, and it is with
87 great pride that we join the basketball community in recognizing a
88 Mississippi athlete who has brought honor to her community, to her
89 university and to the State of Mississippi:

90 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
91 MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby express the deepest sympathy of the
92 Legislature on the passing of Lusia "Lucy" Harris of Minter City,
93 Mississippi, and remember her legacy as a pioneer of women's



94 basketball on the occasion of the premier of the documentary film
95 *The Queen of Basketball* released in her honor, and extend to the
96 family of Lucy Harris our condolences on her passing.

97 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
98 the surviving family of Lucy Harris, forwarded to the Athletic
99 Department of Delta State University, and be made available to the
100 Capitol Press Corps.

