

By: Senator(s) Williams, Barnett, Blackwell, Michel, McMahan, Johnson, Jackson, Harkins, Simmons (12th), Hopson, Butler (36th), Polk, Sparks, Butler (38th), Frazier, Suber, Hill, DeBar, Jordan, Thomas, Caughman, Boyd, Parker, McLendon, England, Hickman, Blount, Moran, Chassaniol, Seymour, Wiggins, McCaughn, Chism, Younger, Fillingane, Kirby, Branning, Norwood, Thompson, Simmons (13th) To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 519

1 CONCURRENT RESOLUTION EXTENDING THE DEEPEST SYMPATHY OF THE
 2 LEGISLATURE TO THE SURVIVING FAMILY OF MISSISSIPPI STATE
 3 UNIVERSITY FOOTBALL COACH MIKE LEACH AND PAYING TRIBUTE TO HIS
 4 CAREER AND LEGACY AS ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL COACHES OF THIS
 5 GENERATION.

6 WHEREAS, Mississippi State University Football Coach Mike
 7 Leach, who helped revolutionize football from high school to the
 8 NFL with the "Air Raid" offense, passed away on December 12, 2022;
 9 and

10 WHEREAS, gruff, pioneering and unfiltered, Mississippi
 11 State's Mike Leach was one of the most influential football
 12 coaches of this or any generation. His boundless curiosity and
 13 fascination for people, places and things made him a unique
 14 character in sports and famous beyond the field; and

15 WHEREAS, "Mike was a giving and attentive husband, father and
 16 grandfather. He was able to participate in organ donation at UMMC
 17 as a final act of charity," the family said in a statement issued
 18 by Mississippi State. "We are supported and uplifted by fans



19 around the world. Thank you for sharing in the joy of our beloved
20 husband and father's life"; and

21 WHEREAS, in 21 seasons as a Head Coach at Texas Tech,
22 Washington State and Mississippi State, Coach Leach went 158-107.
23 In Starkville, under gray skies, the videoboard at Davis Wade
24 Stadium showed an image of a smiling Leach and the message: "In
25 loving memory." Black ribbons were tied to the stadium gates, and
26 flowers were left there to honor the coach; and

27 WHEREAS, "Mike's keen intellect and unvarnished candor made
28 him one of the nation's true coaching legends," Mississippi State
29 President Mark Keenum said. "His passing brings great sadness to
30 our university, to the Southeastern Conference, and to all who
31 loved college football. I will miss Mike's profound curiosity,
32 his honesty, and his wide-open approach to pursuing excellence in
33 all things"; and

34 WHEREAS, Coach Leach was known for his pass-happy offense,
35 and wide-ranging interests. He wrote a book about Native American
36 leader Geronimo, had a passion for pirates and taught a class
37 about insurgent warfare. He gave rambling, off-the-cuff news
38 conferences. He traveled all over the world and most appreciated
39 those who stepped outside of their expertise; and

40 WHEREAS, Coach Leach's teams were consistent winners at
41 programs where success did not come easily. His quarterbacks put
42 up massive passing statistics, running a relatively simple offense
43 called the "Air Raid" that he certainly mastered. Six of the 20



44 best-passing seasons in major college football history were by
45 quarterbacks who played for Coach Leach, including four of the top
46 six. Calling plays from a folded piece of paper smaller than an
47 index card, Coach Leach turned passers such as B.J. Symons (448.7
48 yards per game), Graham Harrell (438.8), Connor Halliday (430.3)
49 and Anthony Gordon (429.2) into record-setters and Heisman Trophy
50 contenders; and

51 WHEREAS, Coach Leach went 84-43 with the Texas Red Raiders,
52 never having a losing season at the Big 12 school and reaching No.
53 2 in the country in 2008 with a team that went 11-2 and matched a
54 school record for victories. He returned to coaching in the
55 Pac-12 but never gave up his beloved home in the Keys. Coach
56 Leach landed at Washington State in 2012. After three losing
57 seasons, the "Cougars" soon looked very much like his Texas Tech
58 teams. In 2018, Washington State went 11-2, setting a school
59 record for victories, and was ranked as high as No. 7 in the
60 country; and

61 WHEREAS, Coach Leach moved to the Southeastern Conference in
62 2020, taking over at Mississippi State. After years of questions
63 about whether Coach Leach's spread offense could be successful in
64 the nation's most talented football conference, the "Bulldogs" set
65 an SEC record for yards passing in his very first game against
66 defending National Champion LSU; and

67 WHEREAS, born March 9, 1961, in tiny Susanville, California,
68 Leach grew up in even smaller Cody, Wyoming. Raised as a member



69 of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he attended
70 BYU and later got a law degree from Pepperdine. Coach Leach did
71 not play college football, but watching the innovative passing
72 attack used by then-"Cougars," Coach LaVell Edwards, at a time
73 when most teams were still run-heavy, his interest piqued in
74 drawing up plays. In 1987, he broke into college coaching at Cal
75 Poly, but it was at Iowa Wesleyan where he found his muse. Head
76 Coach Hal Mumme had invented the "Air Raid" while coaching high
77 school in Texas. At Iowa Wesleyan, with Leach as Offensive
78 Coordinator, it began to take hold and fundamentally change the
79 way football was played. Leach followed Mumme to Valdosta State
80 and then to the SEC at Kentucky, smashing passing records along
81 the way. He spent one season as Oklahoma's Offensive Coordinator
82 in 1999 before getting his own program at Texas Tech. From there,
83 the "Air Raid" spread like wild and became the predominant way
84 offense was run in the Big 12 Conference and beyond; and

85 WHEREAS, this past season, Coach Leach's Mississippi State
86 Team finished 8-4, including a 24-22 victory Thanksgiving night
87 over the University of Mississippi in the intense rivalry known as
88 the Egg Bowl. It was his final game; and

89 WHEREAS, Coach Leach is survived by his wife, Sharon, and
90 four children, Janeen, Kimberly, Cody and Kiersten; and

91 WHEREAS, several teams around college football used their
92 uniforms to pay tribute to the late Coach Mike Leach this bowl
93 season, from UCLA to Alabama. Mississippi State honored their



94 departed head coach during their appearance in the ReliaQuest Bowl
95 in Tampa, Florida. The "Bulldogs" wore a special helmet design
96 featuring a pirate flag bearing Coach Leach's initials, a tribute
97 to Leach's lifelong love for pirate culture. The helmets were
98 kept secret from the team and not revealed until the players
99 arrived at the stadium. The reaction to the helmets from fans and
100 college football "Twitter" was unanimously positive; and

101 WHEREAS, we pay tribute and cherish fondly the memory of an
102 influential Mississippi football coach whose passing will never
103 diminish the profound impact he made in the lives of his players,
104 their families, his coaches and staff, their colleagues, their
105 communities, his profession and on the State of Mississippi:

106 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
107 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That
108 we do hereby extend the deepest sympathy of the Legislature to the
109 surviving family of Mississippi State University Football Coach
110 Mike Leach and pay tribute to his career and legacy as one of the
111 most influential coaches of this generation.

112 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
113 the surviving family of Coach Mike Leach, forwarded to MSU
114 President Mark Keenum and the Board of Trustees of State
115 Institutions of Higher Learning, and made available to the Capitol
116 Press Corps.

