

By: Senator(s) Hopson, Thomas

To: Rules

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 31

1 A RESOLUTION COMMENDING AND CONGRATULATING THE
2 SHARKEY-ISSAQUENA ACADEMY "VOLUNTEERS" FOOTBALL TEAM AND HEAD
3 COACH MATT HOMAN FOR AN EMOTIONAL VICTORY FOR THE TORNADO-DAMAGED
4 COMMUNITY IN THE MAIS CLASS 1A STATE CHAMPIONSHIP.

5 WHEREAS, there was only one way for Sharkey-Issaquena Academy
6 to finish its storybook 2023 football season – with an improbable
7 movie script ending that included a huge comeback, a walk-off
8 touchdown and a State Championship celebration. SIA overcame a
9 20-point deficit, capped by Gary Jackson's wild, weaving 35-yard
10 touchdown run as time expired, to beat Calhoun Academy 32-26 in
11 the MAIS Class 1A State Championship Game on November 16, 2023;
12 and

13 WHEREAS, raising the championship trophy was the final
14 chapter in a story fit for a sports movie. The Volunteers had a
15 2-8 record last season and forfeited their playoff game vs.
16 Riverdale because they did not have enough healthy players. In
17 March of 2023, an EF-4 tornado devastated their hometown of
18 Rolling Fork. For several months afterward, SIA's gym was
19 transformed into a distribution center for relief supplies; and



20 WHEREAS, at the Championship Game, hundreds of supporters
21 came to Sharkey-Issaquena Academy and watched their friends,
22 family and neighbors reach the pinnacle of the sport. "My hat is
23 off to the kids, and the community for backing us and how great
24 they are," Coach Matt Homan said, pointing to dozens of SIA fans
25 who came on the field after the game to take pictures with his
26 players. "It's a Cinderella story, fairy book ending, you can't
27 write stories like that. It's a great thing for the whole state.
28 It's a great thing for our area, our family, our friends, people
29 at SIA, all the small towns, this is for them"; and

30 WHEREAS, SIA won its third MAIS championship overall, and the
31 first since going back-to-back in 2014. The 2023 squad put the
32 program back on top and provided a bright moment in a very
33 difficult year for both the school and the community; and

34 WHEREAS, the Championship Game itself echoed the team's
35 journey. Calhoun Academy (10-2) dominated the first half and led
36 20-0 at halftime. In the second half, Gary Jackson got the
37 Volunteers going and never stopped. Normally a running back or
38 receiver, he was moved to quarterback and ran 52 yards for a
39 touchdown on the first play of the third quarter; and

40 WHEREAS, SIA had 40 total yards in the first half, and
41 Jackson had one carry for one yard. He had two for 149 yards in
42 the third quarter. He finished the game with 211 rushing yards
43 and three touchdowns on six carries. On the last play of the
44 game, Jackson broke out of the pocket and headed up the left



45 sideline. The defense closed in when he got inside the 10-yard
46 line, but he cut back inside at the 3-yard line and juked one last
47 defender to get into the end zone with a miraculous walk-off
48 touchdown; and

49 WHEREAS, "It was great for our community," said Damarion
50 Stamps, who scored on a 53-yard touchdown reception. "We lost
51 everything back in March...it felt great to see our community like
52 this"; and

53 WHEREAS, the 2023 Sharkey-Issaquena Academy Championship
54 Football Team Roster is: Corderrius Jackson, Aiden Allen, Juan
55 Quintanlla, Jake Rutherford, Heath Vanlandingham, J.B. Boykin, Tom
56 Davis III, Gary Jackson, Jahbrey Knox, Damarion Stamps, Ben
57 Boykin, Victor Flores, Mason Jacks, Will Boykin, Brady Brooks, Rex
58 Rutherford, Aaron Woods, Tommy Duggan, Jerry Johnson, Ashton
59 Thomas, Hayden Jones and Grant Billings; Athletic Director and
60 Head Coach Matt Homan; and Coaches Barry Caston and George
61 Roberson; and

62 WHEREAS, it is with great pride that we recognize this group
63 of student athletes who have brought honor to their school, their
64 community and to the State of Mississippi:

65 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
66 MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby commend and congratulate the
67 Sharkey-Issaquena Academy "Volunteers" Football Team and Head
68 Coach Matt Homan for an emotional victory for the tornado-damaged
69 community in the MAIS Class 1A State Championship and extend the



70 best wishes of the Legislature to the team, coaches, parents and
71 sponsors for future success.

72 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
73 Coach Matt Homan and Sharkey-Issaquena Academy Head of School,
74 Sadie Hester, forwarded to the Sharkey-Issaquena Academy Board of
75 Trustees and made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

