

By: Representative McGee

To: Rules

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 61

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING AND CONGRATULATING HEAD
2 COACH JOYE LEE-MCNELIS UPON HER INDUCTION INTO THE UNIVERSITY OF
3 SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI'S LEGENDS CLUB.

4 WHEREAS, in recognition of her superb talent and stellar
5 leadership, The University of Southern Mississippi Women's
6 Basketball Head Coach Joye Lee-McNelis was inducted into the
7 Legends Club on January 18, 2025, achieving the highest honor for
8 Southern Miss athletes and coaches; and

9 WHEREAS, as a key player on the basketball team at Hancock
10 North Central High School, Coach McNelis became known as the top
11 guard in Mississippi, and she caught the attention of recruiters
12 across the state when the team won two state titles; and

13 WHEREAS, after her high school graduation, the budding star
14 athlete decided to stay close to her hometown in Leetown,
15 Mississippi, to play for the Lady Eagles under the tutelage of
16 Coach Kay James; and

17 WHEREAS, upon joining the team in 1980 and earning her way
18 into the starting lineup, freshman McNelis helped lead Southern



Miss to its first postseason play when the Lady Eagles advanced to the second round of the AIAW Region III Tournament, and in 1982, the team repeated history when they made the postseason tournament at the National Women's Invitational Tournament; and

WHEREAS, in her senior year, Coach McNelis led the Lady Eagles in scoring with a remarkable 19.7 points per game, and due in no small part to her impressive efforts, Southern Miss finished the year as the best scoring team in the nation; and

WHEREAS, in her four years wearing the famed black and gold, Coach McNelis won four letters for the Lady Eagles and scored a total of 1,512 points for the team, more than almost any other player in program history, second only to her mentor Nancy Faulk, whose No. 14 jersey she fittingly received upon Faulk's graduation; and

WHEREAS, as signified by her 1997 induction into the Southern Miss M-Club Hall of Fame, Coach McNelis remains a legend in the Lady Eagle record books, ranking amongst the top 10 players in seven statistical categories, including all-time scoring, scoring average (14.0 ppg), field goals made and attempted, free throws made and attempted, and free throw percentage; and

WHEREAS, after earning her bachelor's degree in business distributive education in 1984, Coach McNelis accepted a job working under Southwest Texas State Head Coach Dennis McNelis, who utilized her innate recruiting ability to bolster his new squad; and



44 WHEREAS, upon realizing they are perfect teammates, Dennis
45 and Joye married, and they have two wonderful children together:
46 Connor, who has followed in his parents' footsteps and is the
47 assistant coach at Arkansas State, and Whitney, who, together with
48 her husband Michael Wilkerson, has blessed her parents with two
49 perfect grandchildren, Emma Grace and Caroline Lee; and

50 WHEREAS, after two seasons at Southwest Texas State, Coach
51 McNelis returned to her beloved alma mater in 1986 to work under
52 Coach Kay James, her former coach and mentor, and the dynamic duo
53 helped the Lady Eagles soar to new heights, with the team
54 finishing 103-47 for a total win percentage of 68.7 percent; and

55 WHEREAS, a true student of the game, Coach McNelis showed the
56 offensive-minded Coach Kay new ways to approach the basket in the
57 rapidly changing world of college basketball, and together they
58 led their team to three NCAA Tournaments, two Metro Conference
59 Tournament Titles, and a regular season championship; and

60 WHEREAS, Coach McNelis had equal impact off the court as the
61 recruiting coordinator for Southern Miss, bringing in multiple
62 classes ranked in the top 10 nationally and signing some of the
63 greatest players in the program's history, including Tanya
64 Bullock, Alexis Hall, and 1994 Kodak All-American Janice Felder,
65 the most decorated Lady Eagle in program history; and

66 WHEREAS, in 1991, administrators at Memphis State gave Coach
67 McNelis the opportunity to coach basketball at the Division I
68 level, and in her 13 seasons as the head coach for the Lady



69 Tigers, Coach McNelis amassed a 229-156 overall record and proved
70 her ability as a program builder capable of delivering consistent
71 wins; and

72 WHEREAS, Coach McNelis remains the last Memphis State coach
73 to take the program to the NCAA Tournament, leading the Lady
74 Tigers to four NCAA Tournaments and helping her 1995 team advance
75 to the second round; and

76 WHEREAS, in 2004, Coach McNelis made her long awaited return
77 to Reed Green Coliseum as the head coach of the Lady Eagles, and
78 immediately upon her return, she began laying the foundation for
79 the program's future success by establishing the Wings, a booster
80 club comprised of the team's most dedicated supporters; and

81 WHEREAS, only a few years into her tenure as head coach,
82 Coach McNelis delivered back-to-back 20-win seasons for Southern
83 Miss with 21 wins in 2007-2008 and 20 wins in 2008-2009, a feat
84 that fans had not witnessed since the 1994-1995 and 1995-1996
85 seasons; and

86 WHEREAS, Coach McNelis was recognized as the Conference USA
87 Coach of the Year after her 2013-2014 team won 10-straight down
88 the stretch to finish second in the Conference USA standings, and
89 the team advanced to the Conference USA Tournament championship
90 game before qualifying for the WNIT, tying for the record of
91 all-time single-season wins in program history with a 27-7 season;
92 and



93 WHEREAS, under the guidance of Coach McNelis, the 2014-2015
94 team won another 25 games and advanced to the WNIT Great 8, the
95 farthest any Lady Eagle team has advanced in postseason play,
96 marking the first time Southern Miss posted back-to-back seasons
97 with 25-plus wins since 1988-1989 and 1989-1990; and

98 WHEREAS, in the 2019-2020 season, Coach McNelis oversaw her
99 500th game as the head coach of the Lady Eagles, and in the
100 2021-2022 season opener against William Carey, she notched her
101 500th career win; and

102 WHEREAS, in her first year leading the Lady Eagles in the Sun
103 Belt Conference, Coach McNelis and her 2022-2023 squad topped 20
104 wins for the first time since the 2016-2017 season, tied the
105 program's high-water mark with 13 conference wins, and delivered
106 the program's first conference title since the 1993-1994 season,
107 marking the first conference title for Coach McNelis since her
108 1997-1998 Conference USA claim at Memphis and her fourth overall;
109 and

110 WHEREAS, in 2023, Coach McNelis celebrated her 300th win as
111 head coach of the Lady Eagles in an astounding victory against
112 University of Louisiana at Monroe, making Southern Miss one of
113 only six Division I programs with two head coaches boasting over
114 300 wins, and her 2023-2024 squad made another appearance in the
115 postseason WNIT, advancing to the Super 16 to claim back-to-back
116 20-win seasons once again; and



WHEREAS, perhaps her most significant accolade, Coach McNelis was named the recipient of the 2024 Pat Summitt Most Courageous Award by the U.S. Basketball Writers Association, a particularly meaningful honor due to the friendship she found with Summitt while coaching at Memphis State; and

WHEREAS, the focused, resolute, and supremely talented Coach McNelis now deservedly takes her place as the 22nd inductee into the Legends Club and the third Lady Eagle to earn the prestigious honor, joining her former coach Kay James and her former recruit Janice Felder; and

WHEREAS, it is the policy of this Legislature to recognize and honor the hard work and incredible accomplishments of Mississippi's extraordinary citizens, especially those such as Southern Miss Head Coach Joye Lee-McNelis, who radiates excellence and inspires each player who has the opportunity to learn and flourish under her expert leadership:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE SENATE CONCURRING THEREIN, That we do hereby commend and congratulate The University of Southern Mississippi Women's Basketball Head Coach Joye Lee-McNelis upon her induction into the Legends Club and extend best wishes for continued success in all her future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be furnished to Head Coach Joye Lee-McNelis and to the members of the Capitol Press Corps.

