

By: Senator(s) Norwood, Thomas, Frazier,
Simmons (12th), Horhn, Blackmon, Hopson,
McLendon

To: Rules

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 129

1 A RESOLUTION REMEMBERING THE LEGENDARY NBA BASKETBALL CAREER
2 AND LEGACY OF DONALD EARL "SLICK" WATTS FROM ROLLING FORK,
3 MISSISSIPPI, AND EXTENDING CONDOLENCES ON HIS PASSING.

4 WHEREAS, we join the basketball community and all Mississippi
5 sports fans in mourning the passing of Donald Earl "Slick" Watts
6 from Rolling Fork, Mississippi; and

7 WHEREAS, Donald Earl "Slick" Watts (July 22, 1951 - March 15,
8 2025) was an American professional basketball player in the
9 National Basketball Association (NBA). Playing with the Seattle
10 SuperSonics in 1976, he became the first player to lead the league
11 in both assists and steals. He remained a favorite of Sonics fans
12 after his basketball career; and

13 WHEREAS, Watts was born on July 22, 1951, in Rolling Fork,
14 Mississippi. His father was a mechanic and his mother was a
15 teacher; and

16 WHEREAS, Watts attended Grand View Junior College before
17 transferring to Xavier University of Louisiana in 1970, where he
18 played college basketball for three years under coach Bob Hopkins,



19 and alongside future NBA player Bruce Seals. For the 1971-72
20 season, Watts and Seals led the Gold Rush to its first NAIA
21 District 30 Men's Basketball championship defeating Nicholls State
22 University 85-83, before losing to Westmont in the 1972 NAIA
23 basketball tournament semi-finals 71-59. During his final season,
24 Watts led the Gold Rush to their second consecutive NAIA District
25 30 Championship, defeating Dillard University 101-80. In the 1973
26 NAIA basketball tournament, Watts and his teammates upset Sam
27 Houston State University, 67-60, in the second round. At the
28 time, the Bearkats were ranked first in the country in all college
29 division polls and had gone 34 games, over a two-year period,
30 without a loss; and

31 WHEREAS, Watts was not selected in the 1973 NBA draft, though
32 he was chosen by the Memphis Tams in the second round of the 1973
33 ABA supplemental draft. However, Watts' college coach at Xavier
34 University, Bob Hopkins, was a cousin of NBA legend Bill Russell,
35 who at the time was the coach and general manager for the Seattle
36 SuperSonics. Russell gave Watts a tryout and signed him as a
37 rookie free agent; and

38 WHEREAS, Slick Watts led the Sonics in assists per game (5.7)
39 as a rookie in 1973-74. His playing time increased the next
40 season, as Watts led the franchise to its first playoff berth. On
41 February 21, 1975, Watts recorded his first career triple-double
42 with 12 points, 10 rebounds, and 11 assists, while adding four
43 steals, in a 110-108 win over the Atlanta Hawks. Two days later,



44 Watts recorded a career-high nine steals, while also scoring 13
45 points and adding 14 assists, during a 114-100 loss to the
46 Philadelphia 76ers; and

47 WHEREAS, after signing a three-year, \$100,000 contract, Watts
48 became a starter for the 1975-76 season, and would go on to lead
49 the NBA in total assists, assists per game, total steals, and
50 steals per game, while making the NBA All-Defensive First Team.
51 He was the first player to lead the NBA in assists and steals in
52 the same season. In 1976, Watts' energetic playing style, unique
53 look, and rapport with the fans led *Sports Illustrated* to call him
54 "the most popular athlete ever to perform in the state of
55 Washington." He also received the J. Walter Kennedy Citizenship
56 Award for his outstanding service to the community. Watts
57 followed with another productive year in the 1976-77 season,
58 averaging 8.0 assists and 2.7 steals per game; and

59 WHEREAS, Watts retired from the league after the 1978-79
60 season. He had played 4 1/2 years with the Sonics, half a season
61 with the New Orleans Jazz, and one season with the Houston
62 Rockets; and

63 WHEREAS, despite a somewhat short tenure with the
64 SuperSonics, Watts remained a fan favorite. He was named to the
65 Sonics' 40th Anniversary Team before they moved to Oklahoma City.
66 The Seattle rap duo Blue Scholars named a song about the
67 SuperSonics after him. Watts was a staple at Seattle sporting
68 events, attending SuperSonics and Seattle Storm games. "Slick was



69 a champion for the Storm and a beloved member of the Seattle
70 community," wrote the Storm organization. *The Seattle Times*
71 called him "an ambassador of Seattle basketball" and "a
72 generational figure in the Seattle hoops scene"; and

73 WHEREAS, Watts' sons both played college basketball, Tony at
74 Mississippi State from 1988-92 and Donald at the University of
75 Washington from 1995-99; and

76 WHEREAS, Watts passed away on March 15, 2025, at the age of
77 73; and

78 WHEREAS, it is with great pride that we remember the
79 outstanding career of a Mississippi sports legend who brought
80 honor to his hometown and to the State of Mississippi:

81 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
82 MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby remember the legendary NBA
83 basketball career and legacy of Donald Earl "Slick" Watts from
84 Rolling Fork, Mississippi, and extend our condolences to his
85 surviving family on his passing.

86 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
87 the surviving family of Donald Earl "Slick" Watts, forwarded to
88 the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame and made available to the
89 Capitol Press Corps.

