



Senate Chamber

State of Tennessee

NASHVILLE

February 22, 2021

Dr. Steven Angle, Chancellor, University of Tennessee Chattanooga
Dr. Keith Carver, Chancellor, University of Tennessee Martin
Dr. Glenda Glover, President, Tennessee State University
Dr. Sidney McPhee, President, Middle Tennessee State University
Dr. Brian Noland, President, East Tennessee State University
Dr. Philip Oldham, President, Tennessee Technological University
Dr. Donde Plowman, Chancellor, University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Dr. David Rudd, President, University of Memphis
Dr. Flora Tydings, Chancellor, Tennessee Board of Regents
Dr. Dannelle Whiteside, President, Austin Peay State University

RE: Athletic Protests During the National Anthem

Dear Chancellors and Presidents:

In light of recent news reports, we want to address the issue of our student athletes kneeling during the National Anthem prior to sports competitions. The National Anthem is a symbol of pride for America. It lifts our spirits toward the ideals upon which our great country was founded: that all are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Written during the Battle of Baltimore, the National Anthem represents not only the freedoms we enjoy as Americans but the ultimate sacrifice paid by many in order for us to enjoy those freedoms.

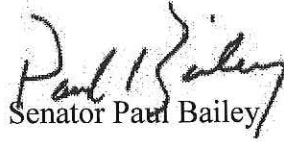
During athletic competitions, our student athletes represent not only themselves, but also our universities and all the citizens of this state, many of whom view this form of protest as offensive and disrespectful to the very thing our National Anthem represents. While we recognize our student athletes may express their own views on a variety of issues in their personal time, we do not condone any form of protest that could be viewed as disrespectful to our nation or flag while they are representing our state universities. When they don the jersey of a Tennessee university, they step out of their personal roles and into the role of an ambassador for our state. We expect all those who walk onto the field of play representing our universities to also walk onto the field of play to show respect for our National Anthem.

To address this issue, we encourage each of you to adopt policies within your respective athletic departments to prohibit any such actions moving forward. We view this as a teachable moment in which administrators may listen to concerns from students but also exercise leadership in stating unequivocally what the National Anthem means to this nation and explain proper times,

places, and manners for expressing protest. While we work together to make Tennessee a better place for all our citizens, let's not focus on what divides us but on what unites us, which is being an American.

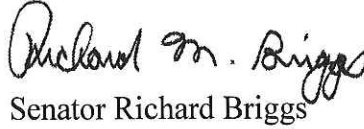
Sincerely,


Lt. Governor Randy McNally


Senator Paul Bailey


Senator Mike Bell


Senator Janice Bowling

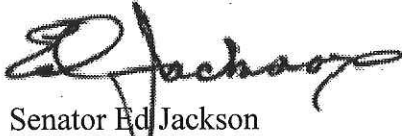

Senator Richard Briggs


Senator Rusty Crowe


Senator Todd Gardenhire


Senator Ferrell Haile


Senator Joey Hensley


Senator Ed Jackson


Senator Jack Johnson


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