



State of Tennessee

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 656

By Herron, Finney

A RESOLUTION to honor Tennessee native and San Francisco 49ers linebacker Patrick Willis.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly are proud to honor an upstanding ambassador of this State for his accomplishments on the football field; and

WHEREAS, Patrick Willis, who plays inside linebacker for the San Francisco 49ers, is one such estimable individual who has been recognized for his exceptional athletic prowess; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Willis was born on January 25, 1985, in Bruceton, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, he attended Hollow Rock-Bruceton Central High School, where he earned four letters in football and basketball, and three letters in baseball; and

WHEREAS, during his high school football career, Patrick Willis was named a two-time All-State selection, Regional Most Valuable Player, West Tennessee Player of the Year, and he was the first person in Tennessee state history to be nominated for both the Mr. Football Award for a Lineman and the Mr. Football Award for a Back in the same season; and

WHEREAS, with offers to play college football from various notable schools, Mr. Willis chose the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss); and

WHEREAS, Patrick Willis achieved a vaulted level of success during his football career at Ole Miss; and

WHEREAS, in 2005, he led the Southeastern Conference (SEC) in total tackles at 12.80 per game, which placed him sixth nationally, and he was named the SEC Defensive Player of the Year by *CollegeFootballNews.com* and *Scout.com*, First Team All-American by *CollegeFootballNews.com* and the All-American Football Foundation, and he earned First Team All-SEC honors from the *Associated Press*, SEC Coaches, *CollegeFootballNews.com* and *Rivals.com*; and

WHEREAS, during his last collegiate year in 2006, Mr. Willis again led the SEC in tackles with 11.4 per game, and he was awarded SEC Defensive Player of the Year, First Team All-SEC, and consensus First Team All-American honors; and

WHEREAS, he was also the winner of the Jack Lambert Award; the prestigious Dick Butkus Award, which is given to the most outstanding linebacker in college football; and the Conerly Trophy, which is voted upon by the media in Mississippi and awarded to the best college football player in the state; and he was a finalist for the Bronko Nagurski Award and a semifinalist for both the Rotary Lombardi Award and the Lott Trophy; and

WHEREAS, upon the conclusion of his collegiate football career, Patrick Willis was chosen by the San Francisco 49ers as the eleventh overall pick in the first round of the 2007 National Football League (NFL) draft, and signed a five-year contract with the 49ers; and

WHEREAS, in his first NFL game in 2007, Mr. Willis recorded eleven tackles, nine of which were solo, and a forced fumble as the 49ers defeated the Arizona Cardinals 20-17, for which performance Patrick won the Diet Pepsi Rookie of the Week Award; and

WHEREAS, Patrick Willis finished his rookie season with an NFL-leading 174 total tackles, four sacks, two forced fumbles, and five passes deflected and, as a result, was one of two 49ers selected to the National Football Conference (NFC) Pro Bowl team that year; and

WHEREAS, during his second professional season in 2008, Mr. Willis scored his first career NFL touchdown on an eighty-six-yard return of an interception against the Seattle Seahawks, and he was ranked second in the NFL for tackles that year; and

WHEREAS, he was named to the NFC Pro Bowl team for the second consecutive year and was chosen as the starting inside linebacker; and

WHEREAS, Patrick Willis was named the 2009 NFL Alumni Linebacker of the Year, an award voted on by past NFL linebackers, and he became the second NFL player to win the professional Butkus Award and was the first linebacker to receive the prestigious award in more than one category, in both collegiate and professional football; and

WHEREAS, he was also voted to his third consecutive Pro Bowl, the first 49ers player to make it to the Pro Bowl in each of his first three seasons since Ronnie Lott kicked off his career with four straight appearances starting in 1981; and

WHEREAS, however, Mr. Willis opted not to play in the 2009 Pro Bowl because of a leg injury he sustained, but remained in South Florida for the game and stood on the sideline in support of the NFC team and his 49ers teammates in the game; and

WHEREAS, on May 4, 2010, Patrick Willis signed a five-year contract extension with the 49ers, making him the most valued inside linebacker in the NFL; and

WHEREAS, he played through the 2010 season with several injuries, even playing a game against the San Diego Chargers with a cast on his broken hand; and

WHEREAS, he was selected to the NFC Pro Bowl for the fourth consecutive year, tying with Ronnie Lott as the only 49ers players to be selected to the Pro Bowl in each of their first four seasons; and

WHEREAS, he was also named First Team All-Pro by the *Associated Press* and, for the third time in his career and the second year in a row, he was named Linebacker of the Year by the NFL Alumni Association; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Willis enjoyed a stellar 2011 season with the 49ers, who ended their regular season on an incredibly high note and propelled themselves to the NFC Championship game, putting forth a valiant effort during the game and in overtime; and

WHEREAS, Patrick Willis's tireless and noble efforts as an inside linebacker have contributed greatly to the success of the San Francisco 49ers over the past five seasons, and it is fitting that we join with the people of Bruceton, Carroll County, and Tennessee in saluting this dazzling player who has excelled time and again on the football gridiron; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor and congratulate Patrick Willis on his tremendous success as one of the best linebackers in the NFL and extend to him our best wishes for every continued success in all his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.

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ADOPTED: March 19, 2012



RON RAMSEY
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE



BETH HARWELL, SPEAKER
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APPROVED this 27th day of March 2012



BILL HASLAM, GOVERNOR