

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 19, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C.

Dear President Biden,

We write to you on behalf of the alumnae of the 1957-1959 Tennessee A&I Tigers (now Tennessee State) men's basketball team, the first historically black institution to win a collegiate basketball national championship in 1957. This championship was followed up by winning titles again in 1958 and 1959. The Tennessee A&I Tigers were the first team in college basketball history at any level to win three consecutive national championships.

During their championship run, Dr. Richard "Dick" Barnett was a three-time All-American. The 1957 All-American honor marked the first time an African-American was ever named to the National All-American team. Dr. Barnett was also named Most Valuable Player of those title teams in 1958 and 1959. Along with Dr. Barnett, the remaining living members of the team include Assistant Coach Homer Wheaton and teammates George Finley, Jim Satterwhite, Ron Hamilton, Henry Carlton, and Ernie Jones.

The Tennessee A&I story is one of trailblazing courage from over sixty years ago that until recently had been buried in the underground railroads of America. As you are well aware, during the era of segregation, HBCUs like Tennessee A&I were often denied access to the same opportunities, resources, and recognition as predominantly white institutions. Discrimination and racial bias were obstacles that the Tigers had to confront on and off the field.

The Tennessee A&I teams led by legendary Hall of Fame coach John B. McLendon Jr. exhibited undying resiliency and determination in the face of intense racism. The team endured constant hate and death threats while traveling across the Jim Crow South in the 1950's.

After winning their first championship in 1957 against Southeast Oklahoma, they received a bomb threat on the plane shortly after takeoff from Kansas City back home to Nashville. After returning home safely, instead of celebrating their championship, they went directly to the A&P supermarket in downtown Nashville and staged a sit-in at the lunch counter. As exhilarating as it was to win, their priority was to stand up in the face of racism to further the civil rights movement.

After decades of being denied induction into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, part one of the Tigers' quest for recognition was finally successful. The team was proudly enshrined in the National Basketball Hall of Fame on Friday, September 6, 2019.

On the 65th anniversary of the Tigers' first national championship, a powerful documentary, *The Dream*

Whisperer was released to wide acclaim. Eleven years in the making, the documentary chronicles the team's historic success and the long and often frustrating journey to have The Tigers recognized for their achievements.

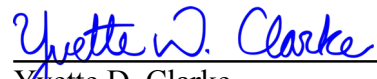
On behalf of all the Tennessee A&I Tigers, we respectfully request that an invitation to The White House be extended to the living members of the team for long overdue acknowledgment and proper celebration.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,



Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



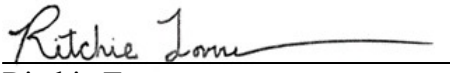
Al Green
Member of Congress
Scion of the Enslaved Africans -
Sacrificed to Make America Great

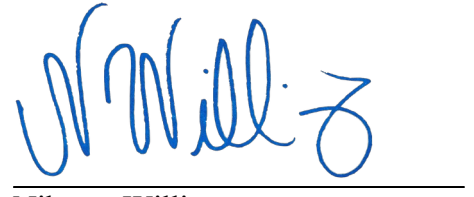



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



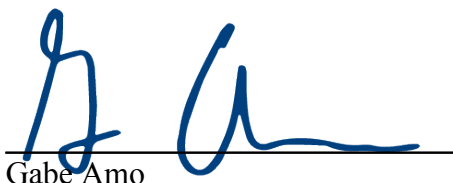
Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress



Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress


Nikema Williams
Member of Congress


Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress

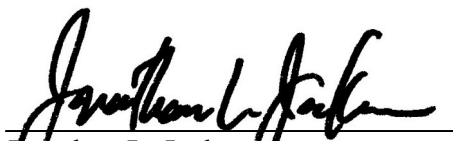

André Carson
Member of Congress

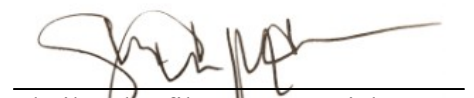

Gabe Amo
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress


David Scott
Member of Congress


Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress


Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress


Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick
Member of Congress



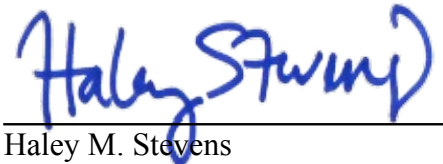
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress



Valerie P. Foushee
Member of Congress



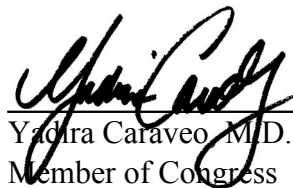
Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress



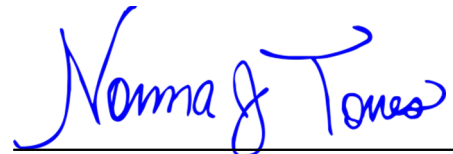
Lori Trahan
Member of Congress



David J. Trone
Member of Congress



Ysaira Caraveo, M.D.
Member of Congress



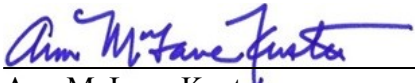
Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress



Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress



Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



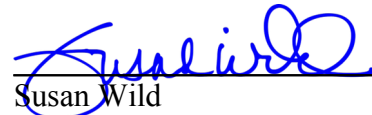
Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



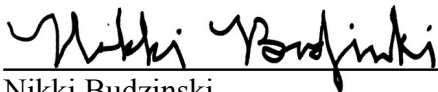
Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress



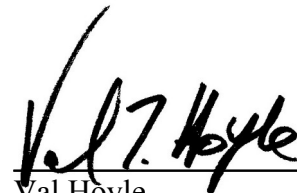
Patrick K. Ryan
Member of Congress



Susan Wild
Member of Congress



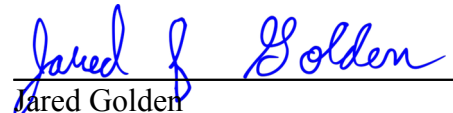
Nikki Budzinski
Member of Congress



Val Hoyle
Member of Congress



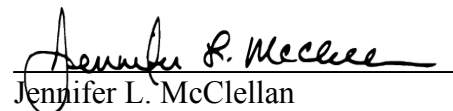
Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Jared Golden
Member of Congress



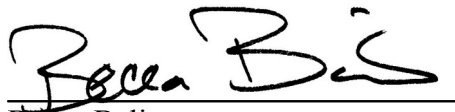
Robert J. Menendez
Member of Congress





Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress



Jill Tokuda
Member of Congress

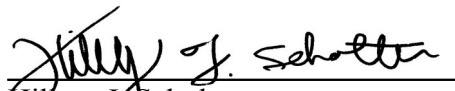

Angie Craig
Member of Congress


Becca Balint
Member of Congress


Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

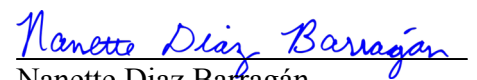

Wiley Nickel
Member of Congress

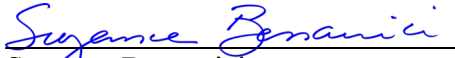

Morgan McGarvey
Member of Congress

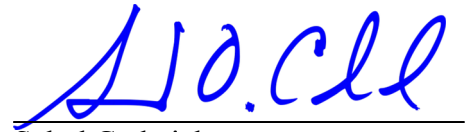

Hillary J. Scholten
Member of Congress


Bradley Scott Schneider
Member of Congress

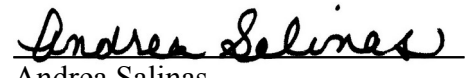

Grace Meng
Member of Congress


Nanette Diaz Barragan
Member of Congress

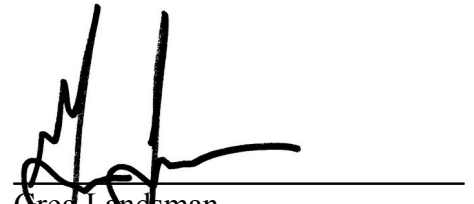

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

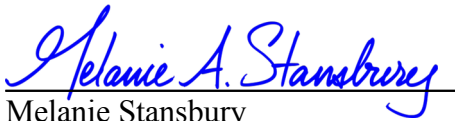

Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress


Jason Crow
Member of Congress


Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress


Andy Kim
Member of Congress


Greg Landsman
Member of Congress


Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress