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## HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 135

Offered February 14, 2024

*Commending the 2024 inductees into the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame.*

Patron—Hayes

WHEREAS, in 1996, the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame was designated the official Sports Hall of Fame of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame, located in Virginia Beach, has honored hundreds of Virginia's exceptional athletes, coaches, and media personalities since its inception in 1972; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame celebrates athletic excellence in the Commonwealth, highlights philanthropy through sports, and inspires sports fans through engaging and entertaining programs; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame will celebrate its 51st Induction Weekend by honoring the Class of 2024 and the Distinguished Virginian Award recipient on April 19-20, 2024, in Henrico County; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame is honored to present the Class of 2024 inductees as follows:

The Class of 2024

*Jill Ellis*

Jill Ellis scored 32 goals as forward for the women's soccer team at The College of William & Mary in Virginia in the 1980s, then embarked on a stellar coaching career that led her to the top of her profession. In 14 seasons as an NCAA Division-I head coach with the University of Illinois and the University of California Los Angeles, she compiled a record of 248-63-14, and her teams made eight appearances in the Women's College Cup. Following her collegiate career, she spent the next 20 years with the U.S. Women's National Team (USWNT), including seven years as head coach. She led the USWNT to back-to-back Women's World Cup Championships in 2015 and 2019 and finished her tenure as head coach with a record of 106-7-19. She has previously been inducted into the U.S. Soccer Hall of Fame.

*Craig Littlepage*

Over the course of 45 years at the University of Virginia (UVA), Craig Littlepage was an assistant coach on the men's basketball team from 1976 to 1982 and 1988 to 1990, worked in athletics administration from 1990 to 2017, then served as the director of athletics for 16 years, during which time the Virginia Cavaliers were one of the most successful programs in the nation, winning 76 Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) championships, and 13 national championships. The 76 conference championships were the most by an ACC member school during that time. He also chaired the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Men's Basketball Tournament Selection Committee, was a member of the USA Basketball Board of Directors, and was inducted into the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics Hall of Fame.

*Chris Long*

Chris Long was a two-time ACC selection, 2007 ACC Defensive Player of the Year, Dudley Award winner, and First Team All-American for the University of Virginia football team. He was selected by the St. Louis Rams as the number two overall pick in the 2008 National Football League (NFL) Draft and went on to play 11 seasons in the NFL with St. Louis, the New England Patriots, and the Philadelphia Eagles. He registered 332 tackles, 70 sacks, and 15 forced fumbles during his career, while also being a part of two Super Bowl-winning teams: New England in 2017 and Philadelphia in 2018. His impact has extended well beyond the gridiron through his Chris Long Foundation, and for his charitable efforts he received the NFL Players Associations Alan Page Community Award and the Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year Award.

*LeShawn Merritt*

LeShawn Merritt attended Manor High School in Portsmouth, formerly Woodrow Wilson High School, and became one of the Commonwealth's most decorated track and field athletes. After sweeping the 100, 200, and 400 meter sprints at the 2004 Virginia High School League state championships, he took his success global and appeared in the 2008, 2012, and 2016 Summer Olympic Games, bringing home a total of three gold medals and one bronze medal. His success on the international stage went beyond the Olympics, and as an eight-time world champion, he won an additional 23 medals in international competitions, 19 of which were gold.

*Hal Nunnally*

Hal Nunnally, who died in 2004, was a native of Petersburg who led the Randolph-Macon College

men's basketball team to a 431-232 record over 24 seasons. During that period, he recorded 20 winning seasons, 10 20-win seasons, 10 NCAA tournament appearances, and an appearance in the 1977 NCAA Division II National Championship game. He earned 11 coach of the year awards, including six from the National Association of Basketball Coaches in the South Atlantic District in 1977, 1981, 1983, 1984, 1989, and 1990. He was inducted into the Randolph-Macon Athletics Hall of Fame.

*Dave Smith*

Dave Smith, a graduate of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, began his career in athletics as the first sports information director in Ferrum College's history. In 1975, he returned to his alma mater where he would stay for the next 40 years. Beginning as an assistant sports information director for the men's basketball and baseball programs, he worked his way up to associate athletics director, then became the primary football communications contact in 1998. Following his retirement in 2015, the College Sports Information Directors of America named him the recipient of its Lifetime Achievement Award and the Virginia Sports Information Directors presented him with its Distinguished Service Award.

*Paul Woody*

Paul Woody, a Virginia Commonwealth University alumnus, spent 40 years as a sportswriter and columnist for the *Richmond News Leader* and *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. Beginning in 1980, he served as the Richmond paper's primary beat reporter for coverage of what is now the Washington Commanders. For his coverage of the NFL and other events, he received 15 Pro Football Writers of America awards, 10 Virginia Press Association Awards, three Associated Press Sports Editors Awards, and two U.S. Basketball Writers Association Awards.

*Monica Wright Rogers*

Monica Wright Rogers graduated from Forest Park High School in Woodbridge, where she won two VHSL state championships and was named the 2006 Gatorade Virginia Player of the Year for women's basketball and was a McDonald's High School and WBCA All-American. After committing to play for the University of Virginia, she rewrote the Virginia Cavaliers' record books, setting program career records for total points (2,540), scoring average (19.1 ppg), field goals made (962), field goal attempts (2,207), and 25-point games (28). A three-time All-American, she was named the 2010 ACC Player of the Year, ACC Defensive Player of the Year and WBCA National Defensive Player of the Year. Following college she played seven seasons in the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), was named to the 2010 WNBA All-Rookie Team, and won two WNBA championships; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame is also honored to present the 2024 Distinguished Virginian Award recipient:

*Rick Jeffrey*

Rick Jeffrey grew up in Richmond and graduated from Hampden-Sydney College. His impact on sports was felt across the Commonwealth during his 36 years with Special Olympics Virginia, including 22 years as president. Rick Jeffrey was the longest serving president in the organization's history and continually grew its selection of sports offerings and competition experiences, while helping the organization reach never-before-seen financial milestones and community impact measurements; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That Jill Ellis, Rick Jeffrey, Craig Littlepage, Chris Long, LeShawn Merritt, Hal Nunnally, Dave Smith, Paul Woody, and Monica Wright Rogers hereby be commended for their outstanding achievements in athletics and philanthropy; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare copies of this resolution for presentation to the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame and its 2024 inductees as an expression of the House of Delegates' congratulations and admiration for their many contributions to the world of sports.