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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of Representatives are pleased to congratulate the Illinois State University football team, the Redbirds, on its remarkable 2014-2015 season, finishing with a record of 13 wins and 2 losses, and making it to the NCAA Division I Football Championship; and

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WHEREAS, The Redbirds are coached by Brock Spack, who is in his sixth year with the program, Offensive Coordinator Kurt Beathard, and Defensive Coordinator Spence Nowinski; and

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WHEREAS, The Redbirds kicked off the 2014-2015 campaign on September 6th at home with a win over the Mississippi Valley State Delta Devils; the win against Mississippi Valley State started a 7-game win streak; and

15

WHEREAS, The Redbirds only regular season loss came on November 1st against the University of Northern Iowa Panthers, 42-28, a team they eventually met again in the post season; and

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WHEREAS, The Redbirds won their next 4 contests to finish the regular season with a record of 10 wins and 1 loss, winning the Missouri Valley Football Conference for the first time in 15 years; and

21

1 WHEREAS, In the first round of the NCAA Division I Football
2 Championship on December 6th, the Redbirds again faced the
3 University of Northern Iowa Panthers; they avenged their
4 earlier defeat, winning by a score of 41 to 21 and advancing to
5 the quarterfinals; and

6 WHEREAS, The Redbirds faced the Eastern Washington Eagles
7 in the quarter-final match-up on December 13th; it was a
8 high-scoring shootout between 2 offensive driven teams, with
9 the Redbirds prevailing 59 to 46; and

10 WHEREAS, The Redbirds win over Eastern Washington was
11 celebrated with heavy hearts, with one minute remaining in the
12 game a fan in the stands suffered a medical emergency; that man
13 was John Rodgers, father of Eastern Washington offensive
14 lineman Jake Rodgers; after the game, many of the Redbirds
15 players were calling home to talk with their own fathers and
16 praying for the Rodgers family; and

17 WHEREAS, For the semifinal match-up, the Redbirds traveled
18 to New Hampshire, going coast-to-coast in one week to face the
19 top-seeded University of New Hampshire Wildcats on December
20 20th; trailing the Wildcats through the first 3 quarters and
21 being down 18 to 6 to start the fourth quarter, the Redbirds
22 refused to go down in defeat and responded with 15 unanswered

1 points, taking the lead 21 to 18 and advancing to finals; and

2 WHEREAS, The Redbirds family learned on December 26th that
3 John Rodgers, father of Eastern Washington offensive lineman
4 Jake Rodgers, had passed away from heart complications; his
5 death shook the Eastern Washington family and stayed with the
6 Redbirds; and

7 WHEREAS, The Redbirds players and coaches wanted a way to
8 honor the Rodgers family, deciding to wear a number 65 decal on
9 their helmets, lineman Jake Rodgers number, when they faced
10 North Dakota State University in the championship; Eastern
11 Washington Coach Beau Baldwin in response, "The ISU football
12 program and Coach Spack are not only incredible on the field,
13 but are amazing men of character as well."; and

14 WHEREAS, The Redbirds made their first ever appearance in
15 the NCAA Division I Football Championship Game on January 10th
16 to face the North Dakota State University Bison in Frisco,
17 Texas at Toyota Stadium; and

18 WHEREAS, Illinois State University alumni and fans from
19 near and far hosted watch parties to cheer on their Redbirds;
20 over 80 watch parties in cities across the United States, and
21 as far away as Guatemala and Australia, had fans tuned in to
22 see the conclusion of this miraculous season; and

1 WHEREAS, The Redbirds knew the contest against the North
2 Dakota State Bison would be tough; the Bison were appearing in
3 their 4th straight championship game, winning the prior 3; the
4 Redbirds were not afraid and welcomed the challenge; and

5 WHEREAS, The Redbird defense stopped North Dakota State on
6 its first offensive drive, with Alex Donnelly forcing a Bison
7 fumble in the red zone; the Redbirds drove to midfield before
8 having to punt the ball away; the Redbird defense came up big
9 again, stopping the Bison in 4 plays before taking over; the
10 Redbird offense took over, capping a 5-play, 38-yard drive with
11 a 13-yard touchdown pass from Tre Roberson to Jon-Marc
12 Anderson, putting the Redbirds first on the board, going up
13 7-0; North Dakota State responded by scoring on a 41-yard field
14 goal; the score at the end of the first quarter was ISU 7 - NDSU
15 3; and

16 WHEREAS, In the second half, the Redbirds were unable to
17 penetrate the Bison defense to find the red zone and score;
18 North Dakota State had one successful drive scoring a touchdown
19 on a 6-yard pass, the score at the end of the half was NDSU 10 -
20 ISU 7; and

21 WHEREAS, The Bison opened the second half with key play on
22 the kickoff recovering the ball on the Redbird 19-yard line;

1 the Redbird defense held the Bison from a touchdown forcing
2 them to settle for a field goal; the Redbirds had difficulties
3 on the next drive going 3 plays and punting the ball away; the
4 Bison then marched 71-yards downfield in 8 plays, scoring on a
5 7-yard run, putting the Bison up 20-7 with 7:28 remaining in
6 the third quarter; and

7 WHEREAS, The Redbirds on their next trip out on offense
8 began to click with a 41-yard pass from Tre Roberson, finding
9 James O'Shaughnessy towards the sideline for a touchdown; Nick
10 Aussieker kicked the extra point and the final score of the
11 third quarter was NDSU 20 - ISU 14; and

12 WHEREAS, The fourth quarter began with the Redbird defense
13 holding the Bison from a touchdown and settling for an extra
14 point, making it a 2 possession game with 11:20 left to play;
15 the Redbirds were back on offense, charging down the field when
16 Tre Roberson connected again with James O'Shaughnessy on a
17 3-yard touchdown pass, cutting the NDSU lead to 2 points; the
18 Bison followed with a drive that ate up nearly 6 minutes of
19 clock before the Redbirds forced them to punt; and

20 WHEREAS, The Redbirds were back on offense down by 2 with
21 2:22 left to play; the Redbirds flew down the field trying to
22 score; on the fifth play of the drive, quarterback Tre Roberson
23 broke free on a run, rushing for a 58-yard touchdown, a career

1 long; an extra points by kicker Nick Aussieker put the Redbirds
2 ahead ISU 27 - NDSU 23 with 1:38 to go; and

3 WHEREAS, The Bison took over on offense, down for the first
4 time since the first quarter; the Bison stampeded down the
5 field gaining 3 successive first downs, stopping the clock each
6 time; on the seventh play of the drive, the Bison running back
7 found a hole and scored; the Redbirds blocked the extra point,
8 but the damage was done, the Bison led NDSU 29 - ISU 27; and

9 WHEREAS, The Redbirds came back on offense and tried to
10 muster one last charge with 0:37 seconds remaining, but the
11 Bison intercepted the ball and ran out the clock, defeating the
12 Redbirds in a thrilling championship match-up between 2 great
13 football programs, NDSU 29 - ISU 27; and

14 WHEREAS, The Redbirds had an amazing season, winning their
15 first conference title in 15 years, and making it to the NCAA
16 Division I Football Championship Game; along the journey, the
17 Redbirds defeated 7 nationally ranked opponents and set 16
18 school records, including most wins (13), most points scored
19 (574), most touchdowns (76), and most rushing yards (3,619);
20 and

21 WHEREAS, The Redbirds graduate 20 seniors, who will leave
22 behind a strong program they helped take towards new heights

1 and will have many returning starters with goals to build on
2 the 2014-2015 campaign's success; and

3 WHEREAS, While the Redbirds were setting records and
4 scoring on the football field, they also scored high in the
5 classroom, having similar success in their coursework with a
6 cumulative fall GPA of 2.87, setting an in-season record; and

7 WHEREAS, The Illinois State University Redbird football
8 team was a model for success, setting many team records on the
9 field, showing their strong moral character, and excelling in
10 their academics; therefore, be it

11 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
12 NINETY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
13 congratulate the Illinois State University football team, the
14 Redbirds, on its successful 2014-2015 campaign, making their
15 first appearance in the NCAA Division I Football Championship
16 Game, and we wish them great success as they continue to build
17 their football program; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
19 presented to the Illinois State University Redbirds President,
20 Larry Dietz, Athletic Director, Larry Lyons, Head Coach, Brock
21 Spack, the entire coaching staff, and the entire 2014-2015
22 Redbirds football team as a symbol of our respect and esteem.