

For release at 7:45 p.m. Saturday, March 2, 1963

STATEMENT BY
D. W. COLVARD, PRESIDENT OF MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY
RELATIVE TO PARTICIPATION IN
NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION
CHAMPIONSHIP COMPETITION

This statement is the result of my best effort to do my duty, as I see it, toward the students and faculty of Mississippi State University, its alumni and friends, and the people of Mississippi. Whatever shortcomings it reveals are failures in capacity or judgment. They may not rightly be ascribed to failure in desire to do the right thing.

There is obscurity about the "unwritten law." Some say it is one thing; some, another. And still others aver that it does not exist. Be that as it may, it is certain that there is precedent for the President of Mississippi State University to act in the matter of participation in the NCAA basketball championship competition. Under that precedent, I am acting with the full knowledge of the President, the Executive Secretary, and the Chairman of the Athletics Committee of the Board of Trustees, State Institutions of Higher Learning, State of Mississippi.

The Athletics Committee of Mississippi State University, representing the faculty, alumni, and students, and the Athletic Director have recommended that our basketball team be allowed to compete in the NCAA play-offs. The student senate has passed unanimously a resolution in favor of playing. A petition signed by some 3,000 students, communications from interested alumni and friends of the institution, and resolutions from alumni chapters -- all convey an overwhelming persuasion in favor of participating.

In answer to this manifestation of interest and in the light of my best judgment, it is my conclusion that as responsible and responsive

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members of the academic community and of the Southeastern Conference we have no choice other than to go. Accordingly, as President of Mississippi State University I have decided that unless hindered by competent authority I shall send our basketball team to the NCAA competition.

I arrive at this decision freely and independently. I make it public with highest respect for the Board of Trustees and deepest regard for the members of the Legislature. As one who has lived in the midst of Mississippians for less than three years, I am cognizant of the hazard of this action and am fully reconciled to the possible consequences of it upon my professional career.

By Coach McCarthy and through my own personal knowledge of the players, I am firmly convinced that Mississippi State University and the State of Mississippi will have reason to be proud of their representation in this national competition, that these are splendid young gentlemen as well as splendid athletes.

My conviction is that the well-trained young people of Mississippi can compete on a favorable basis, athletically and intellectually, with the best in other parts of the country and that our champions are entitled to the opportunity to compete. I am further convinced that the spirit of fair play on the part of all concerned at the scene of the NCAA play-offs will transcend whatever prejudice or bias may obtain and transmute all participants into their essential roles as champions competing for the crown.

My feeling and my faith are that the reception of our team, in recognition of their conduct and spirit, will serve to allay the concern of those who question the wisdom of the participation. My hope for the team is an enjoyable time, good, clean competition, and victory.