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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BILL AND CRISSY HASLAM AND PARTNERS SUBMIT BID FOR WNBA FRANCHISE

Former Governor of Tennessee leads group looking to bring team to Nashville

Nashville, Tenn. (Jan. 30, 2025) – Bill Haslam, Chairman of the Nashville Predators and former Governor of the state of Tennessee, and his wife Crissy are leading a group of investors in the submission of an expansion bid to bring a Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) team to Nashville and the state of Tennessee. The bid will be submitted this afternoon (January 30, 2025) to WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert and the league’s expansion committee. Should the bid be successful, the Tennessee franchise would begin play in the summer of 2028 at Bridgestone Arena.

“Crissy and I are very pleased to lead this effort to bring a WNBA team to the city of Nashville and the state of Tennessee,” said Haslam in submitting the expansion bid. “We recognize the emergence of professional sports for women across the globe, at the same time observing the void in our state.

“We believe a WNBA team, based in Nashville, could serve as a beacon for girls and women, young and old, across Tennessee, while also creating more opportunities for sports fans as our community continues to grow. In building this new franchise, we will take inspiration from the Nashville Predators and its ‘community-first’ approach to running the business. This WNBA team will establish itself as a mainstay in Nashville and communities throughout the state of Tennessee.”

The ownership group is proposing to name the team the “Tennessee Summitt,” in honor of former University of Tennessee coach Pat Summitt, universally recognized as the greatest coach in the history of women’s basketball. She coached the Lady Volunteers for 38 years and never missed the NCAA Tournament, winning the NCAA Championship eight times.

“As a fierce competitor, my mom was proud of the Lady Vols’ championships and success, but she was also a huge advocate for women’s sports and women in leadership,” said Tyler Summitt, co-founder of Pat Summitt Leadership Group and Pat Summitt Foundation. “I know she would be proud and honored to be included in the expansion of women’s professional basketball into Tennessee.”

As part of the bid submission, the Haslams and their ownership partners are committing to plan, construct and develop a world-class practice facility for the Summitt. The facility would also be used as the centerpiece for the franchise's community relations efforts, and it would serve as a hub for youth basketball in the greater Nashville area. That location is still to be determined.

"Nashville is a great sports city, and the state of Tennessee is no stranger to great women's basketball," said city of Nashville Mayor Freddie O'Connell. "The Haslams have stepped up to make a competitive bid for a WNBA franchise. A professional women's sports team is the missing piece of Nashville's landscape, and I'm thrilled with the possibility of adding to our great sports environment."

Currently named partners in the expansion bid include entertainment icons **Tim McGraw** and **Faith Hill** and **Candace Parker**, three-time WNBA Champion and two-time NCAA Champion at the University of Tennessee.

"Tennessee is the DNA of everything women's basketball stands for," said Candace Parker. "I'm excited to be a part of the group working to bring a WNBA team to the state and honor Coach Summitt's legacy."

Also joining the bid is former University of Tennessee quarterback **Peyton Manning** and his company, Omaha Productions. Manning developed a love for Women's Basketball through his close relationship with Coach Summitt while attending UT. Omaha has also been involved with the sport, recently producing a women's college basketball series for ESPN.

The team would play its games in Nashville's Bridgestone Arena, home of the National Hockey League's Nashville Predators and one of the busiest venues of its size in the United States and the world. The Arena is owned by the Metro Nashville Sports Authority, an entity established by the city of Nashville and Davidson County to own and maintain public sports facilities. The ownership of the Predators maintains a lease with the Sports Authority to manage and control Bridgestone Arena through 2049 and the WNBA expansion team would become a tenant.

"The Metro Sports Authority is grateful for Bill and Crissy Haslam's vision, commitment, and desire to bring the WNBA to Nashville," said Monica Fawknorton, Executive Director of the Sports Authority. "We're excited about the prospect of a new professional team modeled on the community centered ideals that define the Nashville Predators organization."

"As Chairman of the Predators, Governor Haslam has great insight into what it takes to build an elite franchise. The expansion bid submission represents an incredible opportunity to grow professional sports in Nashville, to make Bridgestone Arena even busier, and to empower women in a way that inspires future generations. We are thrilled about the possibility of welcoming the WNBA to Music City and eagerly stand in support of this effort."

For those with inquiries into the Tennessee Summitt's expansion efforts, people are encouraged to email the organization at info@tennesseesummitt.com. Follow the Tennessee Summitt on [Facebook](#), [Twitter/X](#) and [Instagram](#) for exclusive content and updates on the expansion bid process.

The Haslams and their partners have utilized CAA Evolution as a strategic advisory partner on the expansion bid efforts, taking advantage of the firm's deep relationships and its understanding of the sports and entertainment industry to ensure the presentation of the best bid submission possible to the WNBA.

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