

2021 Regular Session

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 65

BY SENATOR BERNARD

COMMENDATIONS. Commends Joan Cronan upon receiving the Dave Dixon Louisiana Sports Leadership Award.

1 A RESOLUTION

2 To commend Joan Cronan upon being named the 2020 recipient of the Dave Dixon
3 Louisiana Sports Leadership Award presented by the Louisiana Sports Writers
4 Association.

5 WHEREAS, Joan's first coaching job was at her alma mater, Opelousas High School,
6 where she served as assistant coach to Anne Hollier, coaching the team to a win in the 1966
7 Class AA girl's state basketball championship; and

8 WHEREAS, growing up in Opelousas in the 1950s and 1960s, Joan Cronan
9 anticipated that she would play youth league baseball with the boys she knew from school
10 and it was both a shock and a disappointment when she was told that it was a males-only
11 league; and

12 WHEREAS, adding insult to injury, the coaches of the youth league asked Joan if
13 she wanted to become a cheerleader or a manager for the boy's baseball team, an offer she
14 declined; and

15 WHEREAS, this was Joan Cronan's first battle with gender inequality, but it was not
16 her last and it helped fuel her determination to change the face of women's athletics; and

17 WHEREAS, with no softball program available Joan Cronan, now the athletic
18 director emeritus at the University of Tennessee (UT), saw an opportunity beyond the role

1 of athlete and she turned her considerable talents and energy to promoting and expanding
2 opportunities for women in athletics; and

3 WHEREAS, this vision and the clarity it provided was a signature moment for Joan
4 Cronan, who, without the alternative of playing softball, became more committed to working
5 to promote women's athletics and to make athletics accessible to all women; and

6 WHEREAS, after graduating from Louisiana State University with a B.S. and M.S.
7 both in physical education, Joan married the love of her life, Tom Cronan, and the two
8 moved to Natchitoches, Louisiana, where Tom enrolled in graduate school at Northwestern
9 State University, and Joan coached girl's basketball, volleyball, and tennis at the school; and

10 WHEREAS, from 1968 through 1970 Joan coached UT's Lady Vols to a record of
11 eight wins and ten losses over two seasons; and

12 WHEREAS, in 1973 she accepted a position as athletic director at the College of
13 Charleston in Charleston, South Carolina, where she coached and served as the athletic
14 director for ten years; and

15 WHEREAS, in 1980, while Joan Cronan was at the College of Charleston the school
16 was selected as the number one women's athletic program in the country by the America
17 Women's Sports Foundation; and

18 WHEREAS, in 1983 the University of Tennessee came seeking a women's athletic
19 director and Cronan, having proven herself in Charleston, was pleased to return to Knoxville
20 in that capacity, taking on the challenge of repeating at Tennessee what she had been able
21 to accomplish in South Carolina; and

22 WHEREAS, Cronan's achievements at the College of Charleston were further
23 recognized in 1990 when she was inducted into the school's Hall of Fame and in 1995, she
24 was inducted into the Louisiana State University Alumni Hall of Distinction; and

25 WHEREAS, in 2005, Cronan was named athletic director of the year by the National
26 Association of Collegiate Women Athletic Administrators, another indication of the respect
27 she earned from her peers; and

28 WHEREAS, Joan Cronan's support of the legendary Lady Vol's basketball coach, Pat
29 Summitt, who she championed and supported, would produce eight national (NCAA)
30 women's titles, her teams advanced to the Final Four in eleven of her final eighteen seasons,

1 and garnered twenty-four Southeastern Conference championships from 1983-2012; and

2 WHEREAS, Joan Cronan's remarkable career included these national and conference
3 titles in women's basketball, but, perhaps, most importantly, the success of women's
4 basketball at the University of Tennessee spawned other successful women's sports
5 programs, varsity women's sports at Tennessee rose from seven to eleven, and with Cronan's
6 attention to academics and the whole student-athlete as a person elevated the Tennessee
7 women's athletic program into a nationally-recognized brand; and

8 WHEREAS, in 2010, while women's athletic director at Tennessee, Joan Cronan
9 served on the NCAA Division I Leadership Council and in 2011 she served as vice
10 chancellor and interim athletic director at Tennessee, before retiring in 2012 and being
11 named athletic director emeritus; and

12 WHEREAS, her success at the College of Charleston followed by significant
13 accomplishments as women's athletic director at the University of Tennessee from 1983-
14 2012, brought Cronan recognition that her tireless efforts warranted, and, in 2019 Joan
15 Cronan was inducted into the Women's College Basketball Hall of Fame; and

16 WHEREAS, in 2017, Joan Cronan was the inaugural recipient of the National
17 Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) President's Pat Summitt Award, recognizing a
18 member of the association who is seen as positively influencing college athletics and the
19 experiences of the student-athletes themselves; and

20 WHEREAS, in the press release announcing the award recipient as Joan Cronan, the
21 association's president said, she has "fostered opportunities for countless young women to
22 succeed in sport and in life"; and

23 WHEREAS, Joan Cronan has received the James J. Corbett Memorial Award,
24 presented by the National Collegiate Athletics Directors to the college administrator who
25 typifies Corbett's devotion to intercollegiate athletics and his unceasing efforts for its
26 betterment; and

27 WHEREAS, Joan Cronan has also received the Women Leaders in College Sports
28 Award, recognizing uncompromising leadership by women in college athletics especially
29 focusing on developing the leaders of tomorrow while supporting the advancement of
30 women in athletics and in their personal and professional lives, as well; and

