

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 65

BY SENATOR BERNARD

A RESOLUTION

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, with no softball program available, Joan Cronan, now the athletic director emeritus at the University of Tennessee (UT), saw an opportunity beyond the role of athlete and she turned her considerable talents and energy to promoting and expanding opportunities for women in athletics; and

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

WHEREAS, after graduating from Louisiana State University with a B.S. and M.S. both in physical education, Joan married the love of her life, Tom Cronan, and the two

moved to Natchitoches, Louisiana, where Tom enrolled in graduate school at Northwestern State University, and Joan coached girls basketball, volleyball, and tennis at the school; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, Joan Cronan's support of the legendary Lady Vol's basketball coach, Pat Summitt, who she championed and supported, would produce eight NCAA women's titles, her teams advanced to the Final Four in eleven of her final eighteen seasons, and garnered twenty-four Southeastern Conference championships from 1983-2012; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, Joan Cronan's vision, dedication, and leadership of what has become one of the premier women's athletics departments in the country at the University of Tennessee, has earned her the respect and admiration of her peers and the gratitude of those young women athletes who she has inspired in a nearly six-decades long career, none of whom could have known that being denied the opportunity to play a sport she loved because the team was for males-only began the journey and the commitment that has touched the lives of thousands of young women in such profound ways; and

WHEREAS, the Dave Dixon Award recognizes sports administrative figures who play a decisive role as a sport leader or administrator who bring credit to Louisiana on a national and international level.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend Joan Cronan on being named the 2020 recipient of the Dave Dixon Louisiana Sports Leadership Award.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Joan Cronan.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE