

117TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 579

Recognizing the 100th anniversary of Big Bertha, one of the largest bass drums in use by a university in the United States and located at The University of Texas at Austin.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 6, 2022

Mr. CRUZ submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to

RESOLUTION

Recognizing the 100th anniversary of Big Bertha, one of the largest bass drums in use by a university in the United States and located at The University of Texas at Austin.

Whereas Big Bertha, one of the largest bass drums in use by a university in the United States, is known as the “Sweetheart of the Longhorn Band” and an icon of The University of Texas at Austin;

Whereas Big Bertha is so large that, following her construction, part of the walls of the factory where she was assembled had to be removed so Big Bertha could leave the factory for shipping;

Whereas the year 2022 marks the 100th anniversary since Big Bertha was first put into service on October 28,

1922, in support of the football team for the University of Chicago, which was led by Coach Amos Alonzo Stagg and his assistant Fritz Crisler, both of whom would go on to be inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame;

Whereas, in 1938, Big Bertha made a special trip to Carnegie Hall in New York City to join an orchestra directed by famed Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini for a performance of Verdi's Requiem, where Big Bertha was the star of the show, used to play a single note;

Whereas Big Bertha was a witness to history, having been present at the dawn of the Atomic Age, when, at approximately 3:25 PM on December 2, 1942, Enrico Fermi and his colleagues at the Metallurgical Laboratory at the University of Chicago engineered the first controlled, self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction as part of their work in support of the Manhattan Project;

Whereas the nuclear chain reaction occurred on a squash court under the west stands of the former Stagg Field on the University of Chicago campus adjacent to where Big Bertha was in storage, resulting in Big Bertha becoming radioactive;

Whereas The University of Texas at Austin purchased Big Bertha from the University of Chicago in 1955, at which time Big Bertha moved to Texas, making her new home in Austin;

Whereas Big Bertha now resides in the north end zone concourse of Darrell K. Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium, where she has been admired by Longhorn football fans for generations;

Whereas, due to her important role supporting The University of Texas at Austin Longhorns football team (referred

to in this preamble as the “Texas Longhorns”), Big Bertha has an endowment to provide for her care;

Whereas, since moving to Austin, Big Bertha has been a witness to football history on multiple occasions, including witnessing the Texas Longhorns win national championships in 1963 and 2005, back-to-back national championships in 1969 and 1970, 19 conference championships, 8 Cotton Bowl Championships, and many other prominent bowl games;

Whereas Big Bertha supported the Texas Longhorns during each of Hall of Fame Coach Darrell K. Royal’s 20 years coaching the Texas Longhorns to a record that included 167 wins, 47 losses, and 5 ties;

Whereas Big Bertha boomed in support of the winning Heisman Trophy campaigns of Texas Longhorns greats Earl Campbell in 1977 and Ricky Williams in 1998;

Whereas Big Bertha’s name was given to her on the 50th anniversary of her move to Austin;

Whereas Big Bertha is a television celebrity, having been the focus of a 2015 episode of the Arts and Entertainment Network television show “Shipping Wars” in which Big Bertha was shipped to London, England, to participate in a New Year’s Day parade;

Whereas photogrammetry is the science and technology used to obtain reliable information about the size and dimensions of physical objects;

Whereas photogrammetry has been used to measure and compare the size of Big Bertha with other large university bass drums and has scientifically proven that Big Bertha is, in fact, larger than other drums that have been claimed to be the “world’s largest”;

Whereas Big Bertha and her handlers, the “Bertha Crew”,
are an essential part of United States history and The
University of Texas Longhorn Band; and

Whereas Big Bertha has been part of many historic perform-
ances across Texas, the United States, and the world:
Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate recognizes—

2 (1) the 100th anniversary of the construction of
3 Big Bertha, one of the largest bass drums in use by
4 a university in the United States;

5 (2) The University of Texas Longhorn Band as
6 an important cultural and historical icon of The
7 University of Texas at Austin and the State of
8 Texas;

9 (3) Big Bertha for her preeminence in band
10 and musical performances, including on the national
11 stage as the star of the show at an historic perform-
12 ance at Carnegie Hall in 1938 and the international
13 stage as part of a New Year’s Day parade in Lon-
14 don, England, in 2015;

15 (4) the Bertha Crew and The University of
16 Texas Longhorn Band for their continued legacy of
17 excellence in musical performance and in support of
18 school spirit; and

19 (5) that the ongoing debate between universities
20 in the United States regarding which institution pos-

1 sesses the largest bass drum is reflective of the spirit
2 of competition that has helped the United States
3 reach new heights in academic and scientific achieve-
4 ment and ingenuity for more than a century.

