

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.C.R. 8
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Administration
4/6/2017
Committee Report (Amended)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Throughout the long and colorful history of Texas, the cannon has been an important weapon in the state's fight for liberty and independence as well as a symbol of the defiance and determination of its people.

The very first conflict of the Texas Revolution, the Battle of Gonzales, was fought over a cannon; on October 2, 1835, the 150 Texian rebels at Gonzales refused to surrender their bronze six-pounder to Mexican dragoons; they pointed instead to the cannon and declared, "Come and take it!"; during the ensuing battle, this memorable catchphrase and a painted image of the cannon itself were raised on a makeshift flag that was created by the women of Gonzales; the legendary flag has since become one of the iconic images of the Lone Star State.

In 1836, the defenders of the Alamo boasted the largest artillery contingent west of the Mississippi, an assortment of 18 to 21 artillery pieces, and after the Mexican army captured the fort, the cannons were destroyed or abandoned nearby; when the Alamo was avenged six weeks later by the Texian victory at the Battle of San Jacinto, the famous Twin Sisters, two six-pounders that had been donated to the rebellion by the people of Cincinnati, Ohio, played a decisive role in the defeat of Santa Anna's army.

A cannon featured in a memorable incident in the early years of the Texas Republic; in 1842, Austin residents feared that President Sam Houston wanted to move the republic's capital from Austin to Houston, and when he sent Texas Rangers to take the government's archives, an Austin innkeeper named Angelina Eberly fired off a cannon on the corner of Sixth Street and Congress Avenue, rousing the city's population and blowing a hole in the General Land Office.

Today, vintage artillery pieces can be seen at county courthouses, military installations, and historical sites across Texas; two 24-pound howitzers made especially for the new republic by Major General Thomas Jefferson Chambers in the 1830s guard the south entrance of the Texas Capitol, while two 12-pound field guns and a wrought iron cannon are also situated on the Capitol grounds; a cannon reputed to be the "Come and Take It" gun is on exhibit at the Gonzales Memorial Museum, a cannon used by Colonel James Fannin at the Battle of Coleto Creek is displayed in a park in Goliad, and a bronze cannon believed to have been used at the Alamo is on permanent loan to the Shrine of Texas Liberty by the San Jacinto Battleground Conservancy.

The firing of a cannon continues to be an honored tradition at celebrations and commemorations across Texas; since 1954, Smokey the Cannon has been discharged at every University of Texas home football game in Austin--at the kickoff and the end of each quarter, after the crowd sings "The Eyes of Texas," and each time the team scores; during the off-season, the cannon and its crew tour the country, representing the Longhorns at charity and volunteer events; other cannons help recreate Texas history, such as the fieldpiece fired for visitors by the "Living History" reenactors at the Fort Davis National Historical Site.

These historic weapons serve as powerful reminders of our state's epic struggle for freedom, and they further highlight the unique heritage shared by all those who are proud to call Texas home

RESOLVED

That the 85th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby designate the cannon as the official state gun of Texas.

SUMMARY OF COMMITTEE CHANGES

(1) Amends S.C.R., 8 on page 2, lines 19 through 25, by striking "since 1954, Smokey the Cannon has been discharged at every University of Texas home football game in Austin--at the kickoff and the end of each quarter, after the crowd sings "The Eyes of Texas," and each time the team scores; during the off-season, the cannon and its crew tour the country, representing the Longhorns at charity and volunteer events; other".