

State of South Dakota

NINETIETH SESSION
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, 2015

832W0614

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 1002

Introduced by: Representatives Verchio, Bartling, Brunner, Feickert, Greenfield (Lana), Harrison, Haugaard, Hawks, Hawley, Johns, Killer, Kirschman, Marty, May, McCleerey, Otten (Herman), Qualm, Rasmussen, Ring, Romkema, Russell, Soli, Wiik, and Wollmann and Senators Rampelberg, Bradford, Buhl O'Donnell, Cammack, Frerichs, Haverly, Hunhoff (Bernie), Jensen (Phil), Novstrup (David), Olson, Parsley, Peterson (Jim), Rusch, Solano, Sutton, and Tieszen

1 A JOINT RESOLUTION, making a formal application to the President of the United States,
2 that the President grant a presidential pardon to Peter L. Larson.

3 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA, THE HOUSE
4 OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN:

5 WHEREAS, Peter L. Larson founded the Black Hills Institute of Geological Research in
6 Hill City, South Dakota, in 1978, and has contributed ever since to South Dakota's education,
7 history and culture through his work as a paleontologist; and

8 WHEREAS, a team led by Larson in August of 1990 discovered the Tyrannosaurus rex
9 named Sue, the largest and most complete T. rex skeleton ever found; and

10 WHEREAS, when it was discovered that Sue was the largest and most scientifically
11 important T. rex skeleton ever found, and therefore has a great value, Mr. Larson and his team
12 became entangled in a protracted legal quagmire that resulted in South Dakota's longest



1 criminal trial; and

2 WHEREAS, many independent observers have maintained that federal attorneys
3 aggressively prosecuted the paleontologists, which resulted in Mr. Larson's felony convictions
4 and a two-year federal prison sentence, unrelated to Sue; and

5 WHEREAS, on December 30, 2014, the editor of the Rapid City Journal, the largest
6 newspaper in western South Dakota, stated that Mr. Larson's case "should be an embarrassment
7 to any public official who played a role in the matter and allowed such a needless travesty to
8 take place;" and

9 WHEREAS, fifteen years ago, Mr. Larson successfully completed his sentence, including
10 two years' probation, and continues to lead an exemplary life in which he contributes greatly
11 to worldwide science as well as South Dakota's education, culture, and tourism; and

12 WHEREAS, before and after his case, Mr. Larson represented South Dakota and the United
13 States honorably, for example, he assisted in the development of paleontological guidelines by
14 participating in a South Dakota State Paleontological Task Force and a National Academy of
15 Sciences Committee; and

16 WHEREAS, Mr. Larson continues to express support of the legal system in national and
17 international press interviews despite his unfortunate experiences; and

18 WHEREAS, since 1980, students of paleontology and geology have been invited to
19 participate as interns at the Black Hills Institute's field sites and laboratories, and families,
20 school children, and tourist groups, have been regularly welcomed to visit or volunteer at
21 dinosaur excavations with Mr. Larson, and

22 WHEREAS, Mr. Larson continues to make himself available, without compensation, for
23 innovative programs intended to reach out to the public and students in the classroom, such as
24 a recent scholastic webcast and a CNN interactive blog, where participants ask questions, live;

1 and continues to present scientific talks for audiences of all age and educational levels at
2 museums, science centers, and public venues, in connection with his research, books, and the
3 2014 documentary Dinosaur 13; and

4 WHEREAS, Mr. Larson is known as one of the world's foremost Tyrannosaurus rex
5 scientists and continues to excel in the field of paleontology, making new discoveries,
6 publishing academic papers, working toward his doctorate degree, and gaining scientific
7 recognition for his scientific work, in spite of the impact of his trial and felony convictions; and

8 WHEREAS, through exemplary citizenship, an ability to overcome adversity, and a positive
9 attitude, all of which have inspired students, scientists, and entrepreneurs around the world, we
10 believe Mr. Larson has earned the right to a clean slate:

11 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the House of Representatives of the Ninetieth
12 Legislature of the State of South Dakota, the Senate concurring therein, that we, the members
13 of the South Dakota Legislature respectfully petition Barack Obama, President of the United
14 States of America, to grant a Presidential pardon to Peter L. Larson of Hill City, South Dakota.