



HR0795

LRB103 40669 MST 73408 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The recent push regarding new stadiums for the Chicago Bears, White Sox, and Red Stars has sparked a critical discussion on the most prudent use of our resources, particularly in the context of our State's pressing needs in affordable housing, education, economic development, and violence prevention; and

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WHEREAS, There are so many competing interests at stake with this issue, including lakefront protection; it is important to make sure we keep our sports teams playing and growing in Chicago but in a way that benefits everyone fairly; and

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WHEREAS, It has been almost four decades since the General Assembly created the Illinois Sports Facilities Authority that controls and spends a 2% hotel tax on every visitor to every hotel room in the entire City of Chicago, with all of those funds exclusively spent on stadium construction for two professional sports teams; and

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WHEREAS, It is time for the current General Assembly, stakeholders, and the general public to reassess whether public policies implemented almost four decades ago are the highest and best use of resources; and

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1           WHEREAS, Building two new stadiums with public funds is at  
2           least twice as expensive as building one new stadium that can  
3           serve two or more professional sports teams; and

4           WHEREAS, The threat of litigation for building any new  
5           facility on the lakefront and the success of that litigation  
6           against the proposed Lucas Museum suggests policymakers should  
7           consider other locations besides the lakefront; and

8           WHEREAS, The vast expanse of land along 35th Street and  
9           the Dan Ryan that is owned and managed by the State of Illinois  
10          through the Sports Facilities Authority is currently occupied  
11          by an aging stadium and large parking lots that remain empty  
12          most of the year; and

13          WHEREAS, It must be considered whether a vibrant new urban  
14          neighborhood filled with homes, apartments, shops, and  
15          attractions bustling with activity conveniently linked to  
16          public transit and major thoroughfares is a better use for  
17          state-owned land than a stadium with parking lots; and

18          WHEREAS, In less than a decade, the current debt owed by  
19          the Sports Facilities Authority is scheduled to be paid,  
20          providing policymakers a clean slate with the opportunity to  
21          either eliminate the hotel tax or allocate those substantial

1 revenues to other uses, potentially including, but not limited  
2 to, transportation infrastructure, educational facilities,  
3 affordable housing, and economic development around tourism;  
4 and

5 WHEREAS, While major sports events in Chicago bring  
6 overnight visitors who stay in hotels, so do numerous other  
7 events, such as trade shows, conventions, and live music  
8 concerts, and permanent attractions, such as universities,  
9 restaurants, theaters, and parks, which raises the question  
10 whether it is fair for all visitors to pay a tax exclusively  
11 for sports stadiums if most overnight guests do not visit  
12 Chicago for the purpose of attending a sporting event; and

13 WHEREAS, All of the other industries that bring overnight  
14 guests to Chicago have capital and operating needs for  
15 enhancing their offerings and attractions, which raises the  
16 question whether the revenues from the hotel tax should be  
17 spread among all industries that attract overnight visitors or  
18 should continue to be focused exclusively on professional  
19 sports teams; and

20 WHEREAS, The ongoing viability of professional sports  
21 teams that are winning championships in privately-owned and  
22 operated facilities reminds policymakers that there is a path  
23 for Chicago sports teams to grow and thrive without direct

1 taxpayer support; and

2 WHEREAS, Public universities and high schools in Chicago  
3 also have ongoing needs for large facilities for sports  
4 events, graduations, and concerts, and they might have an  
5 appropriate role to play in this development discussion,  
6 especially the University of Illinois Chicago with its aging  
7 pavilion; and

8 WHEREAS, There is an overwhelming need for more investment  
9 in the west and south sides of Chicago, especially for  
10 affordable housing built around new high schools, particularly  
11 in Austin, and funds for those developments must be considered  
12 at the same time as potential public funds for professional  
13 sports stadiums; therefore, be it

14 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE  
15 HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that  
16 we call for the highest and best use of state-owned land; and  
17 be it further

18 RESOLVED, That the Illinois Sports Facilities Authority is  
19 urged to proactively request proposals from developers for  
20 building housing and attractions on all of its land,  
21 including, but not limited to, the stadium and the parking  
22 lots for the benefit of the public and taxpayers with a goal of

1 moving as much of the land into the property tax rolls as  
2 possible; and be it further

3 RESOLVED, That the Illinois Sports Facilities Authority is  
4 urged to report on how much of the outstanding debt could be  
5 paid off by selling its existing assets to a private  
6 developer; and be it further

7 RESOLVED, That all professional sports teams seeking a new  
8 stadium are urged to collaborate on finding one stadium  
9 solution that can serve more than one team in a private-sector  
10 led development to share the cost and keep the stadium filled  
11 for more of the year; and be it further

12 RESOLVED, That the tens of millions of annual revenues  
13 from the 2% hotel tax should be considered as a source for all  
14 of our budget challenges; and be it further

15 RESOLVED, That it would be a loss to Chicago and the rest  
16 of Illinois for any professional sports team to relocate to  
17 another state; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That with the current climate, the Sports  
19 Facilities Authority, the State of Illinois, the City of  
20 Chicago, Cook County, Friends of the Park, stakeholders, and  
21 the general public are urged to join together to evaluate the

1 highest and best use of resources for the benefits of  
2 businesses and taxpayers; and be it further

3       RESOLVED, That we express confidence in our State's  
4 ability to dream big, think big, and collaboratively find the  
5 highest and best use of our land and taxes to grow our economy  
6 and keep all of our professional sports teams winning  
7 championships in Chicago.