

By: Blanco

S.R. No. 92

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, Benjamin Alire Sáenz of El Paso has been named the
2 recipient of the 2023 Texas Medal of Arts Award for the Literary
3 Arts by the Texas Cultural Trust; and

4 WHEREAS, An acclaimed poet, novelist, and children's author,
5 Benjamin Sáenz was born in New Mexico to a family with strong West
6 Texas roots; his passions for learning and social justice led him to
7 join the Catholic clergy, and he completed his bachelor's degree in
8 humanities and philosophy at St. Thomas Seminary in Colorado and
9 studied theology at the University of Louvain in Belgium; three
10 years as a parish priest in El Paso taught him that his real calling
11 was the literary life; and

12 WHEREAS, Mr. Sáenz waited tables for a time to save up for
13 graduate school; after earning a master's degree in creative
14 writing from The University of Texas at El Paso, he embarked on
15 fellowships at the University of Iowa and Stanford University; his
16 first collection of poems, *Calendar of Dust*, received the American
17 Book Award; in 1994, he returned to his beloved El Paso, joining the
18 faculty of his alma mater and eventually becoming chair of the UTEP
19 bilingual master of fine arts creative writing program; and

20 WHEREAS, Uncommonly prolific, Mr. Sáenz has produced a
21 wide-ranging body of work, including six volumes of poetry, four
22 novels, two collections of short stories, four bilingual children's
23 books, and five young adult novels; teachers across the country
24 value his writing for its powerful representation of the Latino

1 youth experience, and his coming-of-age love story, *Aristotle and*
2 *Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*, became an international
3 bestseller; translated into two dozen languages, it has won nearly
4 30 literary awards, and a movie version premiered at the 2022
5 Toronto International Film Festival; the book landed on the New
6 York Times Bestseller List a decade after its first publication,
7 and its sequel debuted at the top of the list; his many honors
8 include the Texas Book Award and the Lon Tinkle Award for Lifetime
9 Achievement, the highest conferred by the Texas Institute of
10 Letters; in addition, he was the first Latino and first Texan to
11 receive the prestigious national PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction;
12 and

13 WHEREAS, Benjamin Sáenz has touched the hearts and stirred
14 the imaginations of innumerable people through writing that is at
15 once deeply personal, broadly human, and richly expressive of the
16 ambiguities of the borderlands; now, therefore, be it

17 RESOLVED, That the Senate of the 88th Texas Legislature
18 hereby congratulate Benjamin Alire Sáenz on his receipt of the 2023
19 Texas Medal of Arts Award for the Literary Arts from the Texas
20 Cultural Trust and extend to him sincere best wishes for the future;
21 and, be it further

22 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
23 prepared for Mr. Sáenz as an expression of high regard by the Texas
24 Senate.