By: Hinojosa, et al.

S.C.R. No. 11

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CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, On March 7, 1965, a group of civil rights marchers 3 gathered at the Edmund Pettus bridge in Selma, Alabama, and their 4 efforts to advance equal voting rights brought a brutal and bloody response; eight days later President Lyndon Baines Johnson, a 5 6 former Texas senator, called for a comprehensive and effective 7 voting rights bill to guarantee to our citizens the rights contained in the 14th and 15th Amendments to the United States 8 Constitution; subsequently a bipartisan congress approved landmark 9 legislation, and on August 6, 1965, President Johnson signed the 10 Voting Rights Act of 1965 into law; and 11

12 WHEREAS, Considered one of the most successful pieces of 13 civil rights legislation ever adopted, the Voting Rights Act bans literacy tests and poll taxes, outlaws intimidation during the 14 15 electoral process, authorizes federal election monitors and observers, and creates various means for protecting and enforcing 16 racial and language minority voting rights; the Voting Rights Act 17 was amended in 1975 to facilitate equal political opportunity for 18 19 language minority citizens and in 1982 to protect the rights of voters with disabilities; and 20

21 WHEREAS, Despite noteworthy progress resulting from 40 years 22 of enforcement of the Voting Rights Act, voter inequities, 23 disparities, and obstacles still remain for many minority voters; 24 and

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1 WHEREAS, Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act is scheduled to 2 expire in 2007; Section 5 contains a special enforcement provision 3 targeted at those areas of the country where congress believes the 4 potential for discrimination to be high and prohibits any change 5 affecting voters until the United States Attorney General has 6 determined that the change will not worsen the ability of minority 7 voters to vote; and

WHEREAS, Sections 4(f) and 203 of the Voting Rights Act will 8 also expire in 2007; Sections 4(f) and 203 require bilingual voting 9 assistance for 10 language minority communities in certain jurisdictions; the United States Census Bureau estimates that in 11 Texas approximately 36 percent of the Spanish-speaking Hispanic 12 population over the age of five speaks English less than "very well" 13 or speaks an alternative language; it is estimated that 37 percent 14 15 of all Asian Americans in Texas speak English less than "very well"; 16 the language minority provisions apply to four language minority groups: American Indians, Asian Americans, Alaskan natives, and 17 persons of Spanish heritage; and 18

WHEREAS, Texas is covered by Sections 5, 203, and 4(f) of the Voting Rights Act; these sections have opened up the political arena for Hispanics, African Americans, Asian Americans, and American Indians in Texas and have protected their rightful participation in the political process of Texas; and

24 WHEREAS, The Voting Rights Act is a critical link in the 25 struggle to enfranchise the politically marginalized; without 26 reauthorization of these special provisions of the Voting Rights 27 Act, America risks a resurgence of voter discrimination; now,

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1 therefore, be it

2 RESOLVED, That the 79th Legislature of the State of Texas, 3 3rd Called Session, hereby respectfully urge the Congress of the 4 United States to reauthorize these critical provisions of the 5 Voting Rights Act of 1965 by passing H.R. 9 or S. 2703; and, be it 6 further

RESOLVED, That the Texas secretary of state forward official copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, to the speaker of the house of representatives and the president of the senate of the United States Congress, and to all the members of the Texas delegation to the congress with the request that this resolution be officially entered in the Congressional Record as a memorial to the Congress of the United States of America.

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- 1 Memorializing Congress to reauthorize certain provisions of the
- 2 Voting Rights Act of 1965.