

By: Kolkhorst

H.R. No. 272

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, Many proud residents of Austin County are visiting
2 the State Capitol on February 24, 2005, in celebration of their
3 county's outstanding contributions to the building of the Lone Star
4 State; and

5 WHEREAS, American settlement in the county dates to the early
6 1820s, when the area became part of Stephen F. Austin's first
7 colony; the first town to be established was San Felipe de Austin,
8 which served as the administrative seat of the colony and as a
9 social, cultural, and commercial center; and

10 WHEREAS, Austin County was created by the Constitution of
11 1836 and was formally organized by 1837; San Felipe became the
12 county seat and remained such until 1848, when the county
13 government was moved to Bellville; and

14 WHEREAS, Blessed with an abundance of water, grassland, and
15 forests, the county continued to draw a steady stream of settlers,
16 most of whom were engaged in agriculture; among the chief ethnic
17 groups were Anglo and African Americans, the latter of whom
18 composed more than 47 percent of the population in 1847 and 39
19 percent on the eve of the Civil War; and

20 WHEREAS, Although the county remained overwhelmingly rural,
21 it did see the development of a number of communities during the
22 19th century; those established by Anglo Americans included
23 Bellville, Wallis, and the railroad towns of Sealy and Kenney; and

24 WHEREAS, Pushed by difficult social and political

1 circumstances at home and pulled by glowing accounts of life in
2 Texas, many German immigrants also settled in Austin County during
3 the 1800s; for recreational and civic purposes they organized
4 numerous singing, literary, dramatic, and political clubs, as well
5 as one of the oldest agrarian groups in the state, the Cat Spring
6 Agricultural Society; German communities in the county include
7 Industry, Cat Spring, Millheim, New Ulm, Shelby, Welcome,
8 Nelsonville, and Bleiblerville; and

9 WHEREAS, Austin County has also proved attractive to
10 immigrants from Czechoslovakia, who began settling there in sizable
11 numbers after the Civil War and who continued to arrive until after
12 the turn of the 20th century; like the Germans, they organized much
13 of their social life around various societies, and the S.P.J.S.T.
14 lodges still play a vital role in the county's Czech communities;
15 Czechs frequently settled in German towns and were largely
16 responsible for the establishment of Frydek; and

17 WHEREAS, Following the Civil War, African Americans in Austin
18 County set about creating their own social and religious
19 institutions; in addition to the fundamental role they played in
20 developing the county's agricultural base, they also worked by the
21 hundreds on building the railroad lines that entered the area in the
22 latter part of the 1800s; and

23 WHEREAS, In the 20th century, the cultural mosaic of the
24 county was further enriched by the arrival of immigrants from
25 Mexico, who in the 1900s were the largest foreign-born group to
26 settle there; by 2000, Latinos constituted 16 percent of the
27 county's 24,600 residents; and

1 WHEREAS, Among the prominent Texans who have resided in
2 Austin County have been Gail Borden, Jr., a surveyor and newspaper
3 publisher who later invented a successful process for condensing
4 milk; another early citizen, Robert Justus Kleberg, fought in the
5 Battle of San Jacinto, held several prestigious public offices, and
6 in 1885 saw his youngest son become head of the King Ranch; and

7 WHEREAS, Together with exploring the county's rich heritage,
8 preserved today at the Stephen F. Austin State Historic Site and in
9 rural communities throughout the area, visitors can while away
10 their hours hunting and fishing or taking in the lively scenes at
11 the Country Livin' Festival in Bellville and Polka Fest in Sealy;
12 and

13 WHEREAS, The citizens of Austin County can indeed take pride
14 in what their forebears and they have accomplished over the course
15 of more than 180 years, and it is a pleasure to join them in paying
16 tribute to this fine Texas county; now, therefore, be it

17 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 79th Texas
18 Legislature hereby welcome the Austin County residents visiting on
19 this day and recognize February 24, 2005, as Austin County Day at
20 the State Capitol.