

By: Jones of Dallas

H.R. No. 589

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, The African Americans who served in the Texas
2 Legislature and in the Constitutional Convention of 1868-1869
3 demonstrated great courage in a period of Texas history when racism
4 and bigotry were far too common within the state and under the
5 Capitol dome; and

6 WHEREAS, Following emancipation, Black Codes and widespread
7 violence were used to perpetuate, so far as possible, the
8 constraints formerly imposed on African Americans by slavery; and

9 WHEREAS, With the advent of Congressional Reconstruction in
10 1867, however, African American men in southern states gained the
11 right to vote; in Texas, the first election held after the expansion
12 of the franchise was a referendum, in February 1868, on calling a
13 new constitutional convention; and

14 WHEREAS, When the Constitutional Convention of 1868-1869
15 assembled, its 90 delegates included 10 African Americans; George
16 Thompson Ruby, a journalist and teacher from Galveston, led one of
17 the four blocks of Republican delegates, who collectively dominated
18 the conclave; all of the African American delegates played an
19 active role in committees and in presenting significant
20 resolutions; and

21 WHEREAS, The 12th Texas Legislature, the first legislature to
22 meet under the Constitution of 1869, included two African American
23 senators, George Ruby and Matthew Gaines, and 12 representatives;
24 Richard Allen, a skilled carpenter who constructed the first bridge

1 over Buffalo Bayou, served as chairman of the House Committee on
2 Roads and Bridges; laws passed by this legislature included acts
3 protecting homesteads from forced sale, creating a militia and a
4 state police organization to control lawlessness, and establishing
5 a public, integrated school system; and

6 WHEREAS, With the end of Reconstruction in Texas in 1873,
7 pressures to once again exclude African Americans from the
8 political process began to gather force; nevertheless, African
9 Americans continued to serve in the legislature through 1897; among
10 them were Nathan H. Haller, who introduced a bill to establish a
11 branch of The University of Texas for "the colored youth" of the
12 state, and Robert L. Smith, who worked for the advancement of race
13 relations, education, and Prairie View Normal School, and who was
14 the last African American to serve in the legislature until 1967;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, African Americans who held seats in the
17 Constitutional Convention of 1868 and in the state legislature from
18 1869 to the close of the 19th century included Richard Allen, Edward
19 Anderson, Alexander Asberry, Houston A. P. Bassett, David Abner,
20 Sr., Thomas Beck, Edward Brown, Charles W. Bryant, D. W. Burley,
21 Walter Moses Burton, Silas Cotton, Stephen Curtis, Bird Davis,
22 Goldstein Dupree, Robert J. Evans, Jacob E. Freeman, Matthew
23 Gaines, Harriel G. Geiger, Melvin Goddin, Bedford A. Guy, Nathan H.
24 Haller, Jeremiah J. Hamilton, William H. Holland, Wiley W. Johnson,
25 Mitchell Kendall, Robert A. Kerr, Doc C. Lewis, Ralph Long, Lloyd
26 Henry McCabe, James McWashington, Elias Mayes, David Medlock, John
27 Mitchell, Henry Moore, Robert J. Moore, Sheppard Mullens, Edward

1 Patton, Henry Phelps, William Reynolds, Walker E. Ripton, Meshack
2 R. Roberts, George T. Ruby, Alonzo Sledge, Robert Lloyd Smith,
3 Henry Sneed, James H. Stewart, James H. Washington, Benjamin O.
4 Watrous, Allen W. Wilder, Benjamin Franklin Williams, Richard
5 Williams, and George W. Wyatt; and

6 WHEREAS, These men of dignity raised a united voice for
7 freedom, equality, and respect, and their steadfast dedication to
8 building a better state for all Texans enriches this and future
9 generations; now, therefore, be it

10 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 79th Texas
11 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the African American state
12 legislators and constitutional convention delegates of 1868-1900
13 for their many contributions to the development of Texas and for
14 their heroic efforts to create a more just and inclusive society in
15 the Lone Star State.