

BILL ANALYSIS

H.C.R. 102
By: Gallego
Culture, Recreation, & Tourism
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The State of Texas has customarily recognized a variety of official symbols as tangible representations of the state's culture and history.

The precious metal silver has played a prominent role in the story of the Lone Star State, and it continues to be a visible part of Texas culture, reflecting the enduring influence of Spanish colonial design and the western heritage that is so much a part of the state's lore.

Silver has been mined in Texas for more than three centuries, beginning shortly after the Spanish established their first permanent settlements in the area in the late 1600s. The first mines were begun around El Paso and worked off and on for nearly 200 years.

In the late 1800s, prospectors began exploring other parts of West Texas, focusing their efforts on Presidio County. This led to the opening of the Shafter Mining District, which was the site of the famous Presidio Mine-- operated between 1884 and 1947. This one mine produced more than 90 percent of all the silver that has ever been mined in Texas and became a prominent business that created development in the Big Bend region.

Mines began to move east. Hudspeth and Culberson Counties were home to the Van Horn-Allamore and the Plata Verde Districts, and Hudspeth County also contained the Quitman Mountains District. Brewster County was the site of the Altuda Mountain District, and mining took place at locations in Llano, Mason, and Gillespie Counties in the Hill Country. Texas mines yielded more than 33 million fine ounces of silver, which had a value of nearly \$23.5 million, between 1885 and 1952.

To this day there is an interest in harvesting the state's silver. 20 million troy ounces of silver are believed to still remain in the Shafter Mining District, and may prove profitable given silver's widespread use in commercial and industrial applications. Silver plays a role in everything from photography to coin making, x-rays, water treatment, and electronics.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

HCR 102 designates silver as the official precious metal of Texas.