

By: Gallego

H.C.R. No. 164

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, In 1962, Pub. L. No. 87-525 authorized the
2 construction of an international bridge across the Rio Grande to
3 join Heath Canyon in Texas with the village of La Linda, Coahuila,
4 Mexico, for the purpose of transporting refined ore into the United
5 States from nearby mills in Mexico and to one day facilitate the
6 movement of tourists interested in visiting the Sierra del Carmen
7 mountain areas across from Big Bend National Park; and

8 WHEREAS, Since the bridge was constructed, the Texas
9 Department of Transportation has, without interruption, maintained
10 Farm-to-Market Road 2627 as a paved two-lane highway for a 28-mile
11 stretch connecting the bridge to United States Highway 385, which
12 leads from that junction southward to Big Bend National Park and
13 northward 40 miles to Marathon and United States Highway 90; and

14 WHEREAS, La Linda Bridge, also known as the Hallie Stillwell
15 Memorial Bridge, is still in place and is in good repair but cannot
16 be crossed by vehicles or pedestrians because of barriers and the
17 placement of "no trespassing" signs at the bridge since 1997
18 pursuant to orders issued by the governments of the United States of
19 America and the United Mexican States; and

20 WHEREAS, The La Linda international crossing is the only
21 bridge structure in place and the only point of entry authorized by
22 public law between the United States ports of entry at Presidio and
23 Del Rio, a distance of 385 miles; and

24 WHEREAS, The owners of the United States section of the

1 international bridge at La Linda wish the bridge to be reopened and
2 operated as a legal border crossing; and

3 WHEREAS, Local residents, wildlife and conservation groups,
4 outfitters, guides, and hospitality providers who recognize the
5 unique attractions of the Big Bend-Maderas del Carmen mountain
6 desert corridor wish to see the planned growth of a
7 conservation-minded tourism economy but are unable to proceed if
8 the La Linda crossing is not functioning; and

9 WHEREAS, The safety of tourists wishing to enjoy the area,
10 the binational scientific cooperation called for under existing
11 international agreements, and the security and public safety of
12 communities and citizens on both sides of the international border
13 would be enhanced by a functioning border crossing at La Linda; and

14 WHEREAS, Over the past six years the State of Coahuila and the
15 Commissioners Court of Brewster County, represented by the Big Bend
16 Border Council and joined by a coalition of local residents and the
17 Big Bend National Park Superintendent, have repeatedly requested
18 that the United States Department of State and the Mexican
19 Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores take the necessary actions to
20 have the bridge and border crossing at La Linda reopened by the
21 United States and Mexican federal governments; and

22 WHEREAS, The Binational Bridges and Border Crossings working
23 group, composed of United States and Mexican federal authorities
24 responsible for authorizing international ports of entry and
25 required inspections along the international boundary, is convened
26 semiannually by the United States Department of State and the
27 Mexican Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores and will meet in the

1 coming months to consider action on either reopening the bridge at
2 La Linda or ordering its removal; and

3 WHEREAS, In furtherance of meeting preconditions for
4 reopening the bridge set forth by the United States Department of
5 State, an agreement on consolidation of ownership into a single
6 entity with the capacity to maintain and operate an international
7 bridge has been reached between the owners of the United States
8 section of the bridge; and

9 WHEREAS, It is in the economic, cultural, and security
10 interests of the State of Texas and the homeland security interest
11 of the United States of America to have a functioning
12 border-crossing station under the management and control of trained
13 and equipped law enforcement and public safety officials in the
14 extensive area known as the Big Bend; now, therefore, be it

15 RESOLVED, That the 80th Legislature of the State of Texas
16 hereby express its support and encouragement for the reopening of
17 the bridge and border crossing at La Linda to accommodate trade and
18 tourism between Texas and Coahuila, Mexico, and to better protect
19 residents of both countries and secure the protection of our nation
20 from threats that might be associated with the illegal crossing of
21 individuals or materials with a lethal intent; and, be it further

22 RESOLVED, That the legislature hereby urge the governor and
23 the Texas Economic Development and Tourism Office, the Texas
24 Department of Transportation, the Parks and Wildlife Department,
25 the secretary of state, the Department of Public Safety, the
26 General Land Office, the Texas Historical Commission, and other
27 appropriate state agencies to render encouragement and assistance

1 to Brewster County and the owners of the La Linda bridge in their
2 efforts to reopen the bridge and to assume a role as a stakeholder
3 in planning cooperative conservation and tourism initiatives
4 across the Big Bend-Maderas del Carmen area; and, be it further

5 RESOLVED, That the legislature hereby urge representatives
6 of the Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas Department of
7 Transportation to meet at the earliest possible time with
8 representatives of the owners of the United States section of the La
9 Linda bridge, of Brewster County, and of Big Bend National Park to
10 review the status of the bridge and, as they may deem appropriate,
11 recommend formation of an ad hoc liaison committee to offer advice
12 and facilitation to Brewster County and the owners of the La Linda
13 bridge on the future of the bridge and plans for cross-border
14 tourism and conservation; and, be it further

15 RESOLVED, That the legislature hereby call upon the United
16 States Department of State to communicate the interest of the State
17 of Texas in this matter to the government of the United Mexican
18 States and to all other parties participating in decisions relating
19 to either reopening or removing the bridge at La Linda; and, be it
20 further

21 RESOLVED, That the Texas secretary of state forward official
22 copies of this resolution to all the members of the Texas delegation
23 to the United States Congress and to the United States secretary of
24 state and the Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, United Mexican
25 States.