

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, The year 2008 will mark the 20th year since the
2 passing of William C. Velasquez, founder of the Southwest Voter
3 Registration Education Project, and the approach of this solemn
4 anniversary offers a fitting opportunity to pay tribute to the
5 achievements of this voting rights pioneer and revered son of the
6 Lone Star State; and

7 WHEREAS, Born in 1944, Willie Velasquez graduated from
8 Central Catholic High School in San Antonio and then attended St.
9 Mary's University; his dedication to furthering the civil rights of
10 Hispanic Americans was already evident in his college years; he
11 helped found the Mexican American Youth Organization while at St.
12 Mary's and also worked as an organizer for the United Farm Workers
13 Union in 1966 and 1967; and

14 WHEREAS, Prominent in a number of groundbreaking Latino
15 political organizations of the late 1960s and early 1970s, Mr.
16 Velasquez helped lay the groundwork for the Raza Unida Party, a
17 political party championing the rights of Mexican Americans, and
18 for the National Council of La Raza, which has become an important
19 civil rights and advocacy group; and

20 WHEREAS, Mr. Velasquez focused on Latino participation in
21 elections as part of his work for the council, and this led to the
22 founding of the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project in
23 1974; uniting behind the slogan *Su Voto es Su Voz*, "Your Vote is
24 Your Voice," SVREP set out to educate Hispanics about the

1 democratic process and urge them to take part in elections, and this
2 vital work has continued for more than three decades; by conducting
3 thousands of nonpartisan voter registration and get-out-the-vote
4 campaigns, SVREP has helped bring about a dramatic increase in
5 Latino voters, with the number of registered Hispanics rising from
6 2.4 million in the year the organization was founded to 9.8 million
7 in 2006; the number of Latino elected officials has also greatly
8 increased, with more than 6,000 Hispanics now holding office
9 throughout the country; and

10 WHEREAS, Willie Velasquez also realized the need for an
11 organization that could gauge Hispanic public opinion and share
12 those views with elected leaders; toward that end, he founded the
13 Southwest Voter Research Institute in 1984; now renamed the William
14 C. Velasquez Institute, it collects and distributes information on
15 public policy issues that impact Latino citizens, thereby
16 amplifying their voice in the dialog of American politics; and

17 WHEREAS, The untimely death of Mr. Velasquez at the age of 44
18 was a loss deeply felt throughout the country, but his legacy lives
19 on; in 1995, President Bill Clinton awarded him the Presidential
20 Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, and he was
21 one of the civil rights figures whose names were attached to the
22 U.S. Senate version of the Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and
23 Amendments Act of 2006; and

24 WHEREAS, Willie Velasquez is a figure of great importance for
25 all Americans committed to the concept of representative democracy;
26 his efforts to expand the electorate and educate the citizens of the
27 United States about a range of civic issues were a great and

1 influential contribution that continues to benefit the State of
2 Texas and the other states of the Union; now, therefore, be it

3 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 80th Texas
4 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the memory of William C.
5 Velasquez and commemorate his success in furthering the nation's
6 democratic tradition; and, be it further

7 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
8 prepared for his family as an expression of high regard by the Texas
9 House of Representatives.

Alonzo

H.R. No. 825

Speaker of the House

I certify that H.R. No. 825 was adopted by the House on March 28, 2007, by a non-record vote.

Chief Clerk of the House