

By: Rose

H.C.R. No. 21

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, The 400th birthday of modern astronomy is being
2 marked in 2009 as the International Year of Astronomy, and this
3 worldwide celebration represents a fine opportunity to pay tribute
4 to the Lone Star State's leadership in astronomical research; and

5 WHEREAS, In 1609, the Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei
6 first used a telescope to study the skies, and that same year, the
7 German astronomer Johannes Kepler published his famous laws of
8 planetary motion in the book *Astronomia Nova*; sponsored by the
9 International Astronomical Union and UNESCO, the International
10 Year of Astronomy 2009 commemorates these revolutionary
11 developments with activities and events around the globe; and

12 WHEREAS, Located in the Davis Mountains of West Texas, the
13 McDonald Observatory of The University of Texas at Austin is one of
14 the world's leading centers for astronomical research and
15 education; its research instruments include the Hobby-Eberly
16 Telescope, one of the world's largest optical telescopes, with a
17 433-inch mirror; and

18 WHEREAS, The Observatory Visitors Center delights and
19 informs 100,000 people a year with its exhibits, tours, and star
20 parties; the observatory also produces the nationally syndicated
21 *StarDate* and *Universo* radio programs and websites, bringing the
22 latest in scientific research to audiences in English and Spanish;
23 and

24 WHEREAS, During the IYA 2009, McDonald Observatory and the

1 physics department of Texas A&M University are beginning a
2 collaboration with several other institutions on a groundbreaking
3 study of dark energy, which has been called "the central problem for
4 physics" by Nobel laureate and U.T. professor Steven Weinberg;
5 representing 70 percent of the total energy in the universe, dark
6 energy is the mysterious force causing the expansion of the cosmos
7 to accelerate; and

8 WHEREAS, The Hobby-Eberly Telescope Dark Energy Experiment,
9 or HETDEX, will use the Hobby-Eberly Telescope and the new VIRUS
10 spectrograph, developed and constructed by U.T. and Texas A&M, to
11 map the three-dimensional positions of one million galaxies over
12 three years, providing scientists with important clues to the
13 nature of dark energy; and

14 WHEREAS, The study of dark energy represents a revolution in
15 the science of astronomy, and it is most fitting that in this
16 anniversary year of historic scientific achievement, two of the
17 premier research institutions in Texas are working together in the
18 pioneering spirit of Kepler and Galileo to see further into the
19 heart of the universe than anyone has before; now, therefore, be it

20 RESOLVED, That the 81st Legislature of the State of Texas
21 hereby commemorate the International Year of Astronomy 2009 and
22 celebrate the great contributions of The University of Texas at
23 Austin McDonald Observatory and Texas A&M University in the
24 continuing quest, from time immemorial, to bring the heavens within
25 the compass of human understanding; and, be it further

26 RESOLVED, That official copies of this resolution be prepared
27 for The University of Texas at Austin McDonald Observatory and the

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1 Texas A&M University Department of Physics as an expression of high
2 regard by the Texas House of Representatives and Senate.