

By: Rose

H.C.R. No. 55

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, The University of Texas at

1 Austin and Texas A&M are collaborating on the development of the  
2 Giant Magellan Telescope, one of the world's largest new  
3 telescopes; and

4 WHEREAS, McDonald Observatory and the physics department of  
5 Texas A&M University are beginning to work with several other  
6 institutions on a groundbreaking study of dark energy, which has  
7 been called "the central problem for physics" by Nobel laureate and  
8 UT professor Steven Weinberg; representing 70 percent of the total  
9 energy in the universe, dark energy is the mysterious force causing  
10 the expansion of the cosmos to accelerate; and

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

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

23 RESOLVED, That the 81st Legislature of the State of Texas  
24 hereby commemorate the International Year of Astronomy 2009 and  
25 celebrate the great contributions of The University of Texas at  
26 Austin McDonald Observatory and Texas A&M University in the  
27 continuing quest, from time immemorial, to bring the heavens within

1 the compass of human understanding; and, be it further

2       RESOLVED, That official copies of this resolution be prepared  
3 for The University of Texas at Austin McDonald Observatory and the  
4 Texas A&M University Department of Physics as an expression of high  
5 regard by the Texas House of Representatives and Senate.