

By: Dutton, Thompson, Edwards, McClendon,
Turner of Harris

H.C.R. No. 81

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, The African Americans who served in the Texas
2 Legislature between 1868 and 1900 and in the Constitutional
3 Conventions of 1868-1869 and 1875 represent a significant part of
4 the state's history, and it is vital that we honor their important
5 legacy; and

6 WHEREAS, Following emancipation in June 1865, Black Codes
7 were passed by several cities in Texas to restrict the rights of
8 African Americans; it was not until 1867, with the intervention of
9 Congress and the U.S. military, that African Americans began the
10 transition to freedom in earnest; and

11 WHEREAS, Numerous African American men went on to become
12 Reconstruction leaders and important members of the Republican
13 Party; African American delegates to the Constitutional Convention
14 of 1868-1869 included Stephen Curtis, Wiley W. Johnson, Ralph Long,
15 James McWashington, and Benjamin O. Watrous, and these individuals
16 played an active role in committees and in presenting significant
17 resolutions; the Constitutional Convention of 1875, organized by
18 the Democrats to undo the Constitution of 1869, had fewer African
19 American delegates but still involved Bird Davis, Melvin Goddin,
20 Lloyd Henry McCabe, and William Reynolds, among others; and

21 WHEREAS, George Thompson Ruby, a leading delegate to the
22 Constitutional Convention of 1868-1869, went on to become one of
23 the most influential senators in the 12th and 13th Legislatures;
24 Matthew Gaines and Walter E. Ripton also served as senators during

1 the 1870s, and Senator Walter Moses Burton represented parts of
2 Southeast Texas for nearly a decade; and

3 WHEREAS, Many other African American men were elected as
4 state representatives; among them were David Abner, Sr., Richard
5 Allen, Edward Anderson, Alexander Asberry, Houston A. P. Bassett,
6 Thomas Beck, Edward Brown, D. W. Burley, Silas Cotton, Goldstein
7 Dupree, Robert J. Evans, Jacob E. Freeman, Harriel G. Geiger,
8 Bedford A. Guy, Nathan H. Haller, Jeremiah J. Hamilton, William H.
9 Holland, Mitchell Kendall, Robert A. Kerr, Doc C. Lewis, Elias
10 Mayes, David Medlock, John Mitchell, Henry Moore, Robert J. Moore,
11 Sheppard Mullens, Edward Patton, Henry Phelps, Meshack R. Roberts,
12 Alonzo Sledge, Robert Lloyd Smith, Henry Sneed, James H. Stewart,
13 James H. Washington, Allen W. Wilder, Benjamin Franklin Williams,
14 Richard Williams, and George W. Wyatt; and

15 WHEREAS, These dedicated public servants made great strides
16 in education for African Americans, and they advocated tirelessly
17 for civil rights; by the late 1870s, however, their gains in the
18 political arena were threatened by a new wave of racial
19 intolerance; the 25th Legislature in 1897 would be the last that
20 included an African American member for seven decades; and

21 WHEREAS, A framed composite in honor of the state's early
22 African American political leaders hangs in the Capitol South
23 Lobby, but the photographs of several individuals are missing, and
24 thus our tribute to them remains incomplete; now, therefore, be it

25 RESOLVED, That the 81st Legislature of the State of Texas
26 hereby direct the State Preservation Board to initiate an effort to
27 obtain missing photographs of early African American political

1 leaders who are honored in a composite in the Capitol South Lobby;
2 and, be it further

3 RESOLVED, That the State Preservation Board be directed to
4 ensure that the composite is included on Capitol tours; and, be it
5 further

6 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
7 forwarded to the executive director of the State Preservation Board
8 as an expression of the sentiment of the Texas Legislature.