

By: Giddings

H.R. No. 487

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, The celebration of Black History Month in February
2 2009 provides an opportunity to recognize the rich cultural
3 heritage of African Americans and the significant contributions
4 they have made and are making in the Lone Star State; and

5 WHEREAS, An event celebrating black history was established
6 in 1926 as a weeklong observance by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, an author
7 and scholar and the son of former slaves who sought a means of
8 educating non-black Americans about African American culture and
9 engendering pride among black Americans; the tribute was expanded
10 to a month in 1976 and was officially recognized by President Gerald
11 Ford, who encouraged all Americans to pay " . . . tribute to Black
12 History Month and the message of courage and perseverance it brings
13 to all of us"; and

14 WHEREAS, People of African descent have a long history in
15 Texas; in 1528, a Moor named Estevan accompanied the Spanish
16 explorer Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca on a trek across our state; by
17 the end of the 18th century, some 450 individuals of African origins
18 lived in Spanish Texas, and in the early 1800s many African
19 Americans enslaved in the American South crossed the Sabine River,
20 seeking their freedom and settling in East Texas; and

21 WHEREAS, In the 19th century, before emancipation, African
22 Americans played an enormous role in producing the state's
23 agricultural bounty and also worked as skilled artisans; after the
24 Civil War, many moved to urban centers, and in the years to follow,

1 provided manpower for new industries that were established; and

2 WHEREAS, African American infantry and cavalry garrisoned
3 forts in West Texas during the Indian Wars; known as "Buffalo
4 Soldiers," they patrolled the frontier with the assistance of
5 Seminole-Negro Indian scouts, built roads, and escorted mail
6 carriers; Sergeant Emmanuel Stance, stationed at Fort McKavett, was
7 the first African American who fought in the Indian Wars to be
8 awarded the Medal of Honor; and

9 WHEREAS, Since the early 1800s, African Americans have been
10 involved in the cattle industry; one of the most famous black native
11 Texan cowboys was William Pickett, who became a Wild West rodeo
12 performer and who is believed to have originated the bulldogging
13 event; and

14 WHEREAS, In the mid-20th century, African Americans in Texas
15 significantly advanced the civil rights movement by filing and
16 winning lawsuits that outlawed the white primary and helped to
17 integrate graduate and professional schools; today, influential
18 African American leaders continue to follow in the footsteps of
19 their predecessors, taking their rightful place in the public arena
20 and promoting social justice; and

21 WHEREAS, African Americans have been a significant part of
22 the population of Texas for hundreds of years, and the celebration
23 of Black History Month acknowledges and promotes the immeasurable
24 benefits of living in a truly diverse society; now, therefore, be it

25 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 81st Texas
26 Legislature hereby recognize February 2009 as Black History Month
27 and encourage all citizens to learn more about the history and

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1 accomplishments of African Americans in the Lone Star State.