

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 203

WHEREAS, Many proud residents of Austin County are visiting the State Capitol on February 19, 2009, in celebration of their county's outstanding contributions to the Lone Star State; and

WHEREAS, American settlement in the county dates to the early 1820s, when the area became part of Stephen F. Austin's first colony; the first town to be established was San Felipe de Austin, which served as the administrative seat of the colony and as a social, cultural, and commercial center; and

WHEREAS, Austin County was created by the Constitution of 1836 and was formally organized in 1837; San Felipe became the county seat and remained so until 1848, when the county government was moved to Bellville; and

WHEREAS, Blessed with an abundance of water, grassland, and forests, Austin County drew a steady stream of settlers, most of whom were engaged in agriculture; although the county remained overwhelmingly rural, the development of a number of communities took place during the 19th century, including Bellville, Wallis, and the railroad towns of Sealy and Kenney; and

WHEREAS, Due to difficult social and political circumstances at home and lured by glowing accounts of life in Texas, many German immigrants settled in Austin County during the 1800s; for recreational and civic purposes, they organized numerous singing, literary, dramatic, and political clubs, as well as one of the oldest agrarian groups in the state, the Cat Spring Agricultural Society; German communities in the county include Industry, Cat Spring, Millheim, New Ulm, Shelby, Welcome, Nelsonville, and Bleiblerville; and

WHEREAS, Austin County has also proved attractive to immigrants from Czechoslovakia, who began settling in the county in sizable numbers after the Civil War and who continued to arrive until after the turn of the 20th century; like the Germans, they organized much of their social life around various societies, which still play a vital role in the county's Czech communities; Czechs frequently settled in German towns and were largely responsible for the establishment of Frydek; and

WHEREAS, Following the Civil War, African Americans in Austin County set about creating their own social and religious institutions; in addition to the fundamental role they played in developing the county's agricultural base, they also worked by the hundreds on building the railroad lines that entered the area in the latter part of the 1800s; and

WHEREAS, In the 20th century, the cultural mosaic of the county was further enriched by the arrival of immigrants from Mexico, who in the 1900s were the largest foreign-born group to settle in the area; by 2000, Latinos constituted 16 percent of the county's 24,600 residents; and

WHEREAS, Prominent Texans who have resided in Austin County include such early citizens as Gail Borden, Jr., a surveyor and newspaper publisher who later invented a successful process for condensing milk; another early citizen, Robert Justus Kleberg, fought in the Battle of San Jacinto, held several prestigious public offices, and, in 1885, saw his youngest son become head of the King Ranch; and

S.R. No. 203

WHEREAS, Today, visitors to the county can enjoy exploring the county's rich heritage, preserved at the Stephen F. Austin State Historic Site and in rural communities throughout the area, while away their hours hunting and fishing, or take in the lively scenes at the Bellville Heritage Gathering in Bellville and the Polka Fest in Sealy; and

WHEREAS, The citizens of Austin County can indeed take pride in what their forebears and they have accomplished over the course of more than 180 years, and it is a pleasure to join them in paying tribute to this exemplary Texas county; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of the State of Texas, 81st Legislature, hereby welcome the Austin County residents visiting on this day and recognize February 19, 2009, as Austin County Day at the State Capitol.

Hegar

President of the Senate

I hereby certify that the above Resolution was adopted by the Senate on February 17, 2009.

Secretary of the Senate

Member, Texas Senate