

By: Chisum, Landtroop, Gallego

H.C.R. No. 86

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1           WHEREAS, The State of Texas has customarily recognized a  
2 variety of official symbols as tangible representations of the  
3 state's historical and cultural heritage; figuring prominently in  
4 that distinctive list are animals that played a central role in the  
5 rich Western heritage of Texas, including the longhorn and the  
6 American quarter horse; and

7           WHEREAS, Another deserving candidate for recognition is the  
8 bison, popularly known as the buffalo; after arriving in North  
9 America some 25,000 years ago, the bison adapted particularly well  
10 to the environment of the Great Plains; by the 1700s, as many as 60  
11 million buffalo were living on the continent, and the lands that  
12 were to become Texas were among the areas roamed by the vast herds;  
13 and

14           WHEREAS, The animals were central to the livelihood of the  
15 Native Americans of the Great Plains, providing not only their main  
16 diet but also materials for shelter, clothing, and many other  
17 staples; the ample supply of bison and the hunting culture of the  
18 Plains tribes were not to last, however; with the completion of the  
19 transcontinental railroad in 1869, it became possible to profitably  
20 ship bison hides and meat to eastern markets by rail, and in the  
21 next 15 years, buffalo hunters almost completely exterminated the  
22 herds; by 1885, fewer than 1,000 animals remained; and

23           WHEREAS, Fortunately, some Texans had the foresight to try  
24 and save this noble creature; Mary Ann "Molly" Goodnight, the wife

1 of legendary Texas rancher Charles Goodnight, was so distressed by  
2 the rapid disappearance of the bison that she convinced her husband  
3 to begin capturing and protecting bison calves from the small  
4 number of wild animals that remained on the Southern Plains; he  
5 began to round up young bison in the 1870s in the northern Texas  
6 Panhandle, and the herd at Goodnight's JA Ranch eventually grew to  
7 about 250 head by the time Mr. Goodnight passed away in 1929; and

8         WHEREAS, The Goodnight bison herd became one of the five  
9 foundation herds in the United States from which the majority of  
10 surviving buffalo have developed; a number of animals directly  
11 descended from the Goodnight stock were donated to the Texas Parks  
12 and Wildlife Department in 1996, and a subset of that group was  
13 determined to be a pure strain that had not been crossbred with  
14 bison from other areas; given a home at Caprock Canyons State Park,  
15 those buffalo and their offspring are today known as the Texas State  
16 Bison Herd and are notable for their strong genetic link to the  
17 original Southern Plains buffalo and because they continue to live  
18 in the area where their ancestors were first caught; and

19         WHEREAS, In both its historical significance and its enduring  
20 connections to Texas imagery and culture, the Texas State Bison  
21 Herd at Caprock Canyons State Park is indeed a fitting symbol for  
22 the Lone Star State; now, therefore, be it

23         RESOLVED, That the 82nd Legislature of the State of Texas  
24 hereby designate the Texas State Bison Herd at Caprock Canyons  
25 State Park as the official State Bison Herd of Texas.