

By: Branch

H.R. No. 845

R E S O L U T I O N

1           WHEREAS, March 16, 2011, marks the 150th anniversary of  
2 Governor Sam Houston's refusal to take the oath of allegiance to the  
3 Confederate States of America; and

4           WHEREAS, An ardent unionist, Sam Houston had spent much of  
5 his life in public service; born in Virginia in 1793, he fought with  
6 valor during the War of 1812 and afterward rose to prominence in  
7 Tennessee, where he served as attorney general, won two elections  
8 to the U.S. House of Representatives, and was elected governor; and

9           WHEREAS, After moving to Texas in 1832, he quickly became  
10 involved in the struggle for independence; he served as a delegate  
11 to the Convention of 1833, the Consultation of 1835, and the  
12 Convention of 1836, during which he signed the Texas Declaration of  
13 Independence and received appointment as commander in chief of the  
14 Texas Army; his victory at the Battle of San Jacinto secured Texas'  
15 independence from Mexico and led to his election as president of the  
16 new republic; he then served in the Texas House of Representatives  
17 before holding the presidency again for a second term; and

18           WHEREAS, With Texas' admission to the Union, Sam Houston  
19 became one of the state's first two senators; his pro-Union stance,  
20 however, cost him support in the Texas Legislature, which chose  
21 John Hemphill to replace him when his term in the senate ended in  
22 1859; Sam Houston then ran for the governorship of Texas and won,  
23 assuming office on December 21, 1859; and

24           WHEREAS, The following year, the fear that Abraham Lincoln

1 and the Republican Party might capture the presidency and threaten  
2 the institution of slavery gave further momentum to the  
3 secessionist movement in the South; Sam Houston understood that  
4 disunion would provoke a lengthy war, one the South would stand  
5 little chance of winning; in the fall of 1860, he undertook a  
6 speaking tour in an effort to rally adherence to the Union, even in  
7 the event of a Republican victory in November; and

8       WHEREAS, Addressing an audience in Austin on September 22,  
9 1860, Governor Houston told his listeners: "when . . . in 1836, I  
10 volunteered to aid in transplanting American liberty to this soil,  
11 it was with the belief that the Constitution and the Union were to  
12 be perpetual blessings to the human race--that the success of the  
13 experiment of our fathers was beyond dispute, and that whether  
14 under the banner of the Lone Star or that many-starred banner of the  
15 Union, I could point to the land of Washington, Jefferson, and  
16 Jackson, as the land blest beyond all other lands, where freedom  
17 would be eternal and Union unbroken. It concerns me deeply, as it  
18 does everyone here, that these bright anticipations should be  
19 realized; and that it should be continued not only the proudest  
20 nationality the world has ever produced, but the freest and most  
21 perfect"; and

22       WHEREAS, The tide of public sentiment was against him,  
23 however, and on January 28, 1861, a convention convened in Austin to  
24 take up the question of secession; several days later, speaking to a  
25 committee of the convention, Governor Houston laid out the  
26 consequences of their project in stark terms: "To secede from the  
27 Union and set up another government would cause war. . . . If you

1 go to war with the United States, you will never conquer her, as she  
2 has the money and the men. If she does not whip you by guns, powder,  
3 and steel, she will starve you to death. . . . if you go to war, it  
4 will take the flower of the country--the young men. . . . There  
5 will be thousands and thousands who march away from our homes never  
6 to come back"; and

7 WHEREAS, Notwithstanding his impassioned argument, the  
8 delegates proceeded to adopt an ordinance of secession; after Texas  
9 voters ratified that decision on February 23, 1861, the Secession  
10 Convention reconvened and demanded that all current officeholders  
11 take an oath of allegiance to the Confederacy; Governor Houston was  
12 summoned to take the oath before the convention on March 16, but he  
13 refused to appear; the delegates consequently declared the office  
14 of governor vacant and swore in the lieutenant governor to take his  
15 place; and

16 WHEREAS, Explaining his course of action in an address to the  
17 public, Governor Houston avowed: "In the name of the Constitution  
18 of Texas, which has been trampled upon, I refuse to take this oath";  
19 he went on, though, to say, "I love Texas too well to bring civil  
20 strife and bloodshed upon her. To avert this calamity, I shall make  
21 no endeavor to maintain my authority as Chief Executive of this  
22 State. . . . "; and

23 WHEREAS, Sam Houston never again held public office; he  
24 settled with his family in Huntsville, where he died on July 26,  
25 1863; as he had predicted, the North blockaded southern ports, and  
26 the greater manpower and industrial resources of the Union  
27 contributed heavily to its ultimate victory; by the war's end, in

1 April 1865, total Confederate losses stood at approximately  
2 258,000, and slavery as an institution was essentially dead; and

3       WHEREAS, In his biography of Sam Houston, one historian was  
4 reminded of an observation made by the German philosopher G. W. F.  
5 Hegel, who "wrote that the mark of a great man is his ability to tell  
6 the people of his era what their will is and accomplish it"; "the  
7 tragedy of Sam Houston['s life]," concluded the historian, "was  
8 that he told his era what its will should have been and it cost him  
9 everything"; now, therefore, be it

10       RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 82nd Texas  
11 Legislature hereby honor Sam Houston for his statesmanship on the  
12 150th anniversary of his refusal to take the oath of loyalty to the  
13 Confederate States of America.