

By: Gonzalez

H.R. No. 1659

R E S O L U T I O N

1           WHEREAS, Henry Kellen of El Paso survived the Holocaust and  
2 has built on his experiences to create the El Paso Holocaust Museum  
3 and Study Center; and

4           WHEREAS, Henry Kellen was born Heniek Kacenelebogen in Lodz,  
5 Poland, in 1915; after completing university studies in France and  
6 graduating with a degree in mechanical engineering in 1938, he  
7 settled in Kaunas, Lithuania; following the outbreak of World War  
8 II, the area was seized by the Soviet Union and then, in turn, by  
9 Nazi Germany in June 1941; and

10           WHEREAS, Mr. Kellen and all other Jews from the town of Kaunas  
11 were forced to relocate to the Kovno Ghetto; over the next several  
12 years, the Nazis reduced the population of the ghetto by means of  
13 deportations to work and death camps as well as mass executions;  
14 only 1 in 10 Jews in Lithuania survived the Holocaust; and

15           WHEREAS, Those in the Kovno Ghetto tried to maintain normalcy  
16 as best they could; schools were operated in defiance of Nazi orders  
17 and some individuals, such as Mr. Kellen and his wife, Julia, got  
18 married while confined there; in March 1944, Mr. Kellen witnessed  
19 the *kinderaktion*, during which the Nazis rounded up and killed  
20 hundreds of babies and children and Mr. Kellen's seven-year-old  
21 nephew, Jerry, narrowly avoided death; with the ghetto being  
22 systematically reduced, Mr. and Mrs. Kellen and Jerry escaped the  
23 following month; they were hidden by Christian farmers named  
24 Andrius and Maria Urbanas until the Soviet army drove the Nazis from

1 the area; and

2 WHEREAS, After the war, Mr. Kellen settled in El Paso; he and  
3 his wife initially vowed not to speak of their past, but, as he  
4 entered retirement nearly four decades later, he began to feel an  
5 obligation to those who had not survived as he had; with a small  
6 corner of borrowed space at the Jewish Community Center, Mr. Kellen  
7 began to tell his remarkable story; he met with school, church, and  
8 civic groups to discuss his treatment at the hands of the Nazis; his  
9 talks proved so popular that it soon became apparent that a  
10 dedicated space was needed for a Holocaust museum; and

11 WHEREAS, Through community support, the museum opened its  
12 doors in 1994; an electrical fire destroyed the original building  
13 in 2001, but the museum continued to operate by visiting schools and  
14 using temporary gallery space; the people of El Paso rallied to help  
15 raise \$2.5 million for a new facility, which opened in 2008; and

16 WHEREAS, In 2009, El Paso mayor John Cook honored Mr. Kellen  
17 with the Conquistador Award, the highest possible accolade that can  
18 be given to an El Pasoan who has made exceptional contributions to  
19 the city; and

20 WHEREAS, Through the efforts of Henry Kellen, the lessons of  
21 the Holocaust--that hatred and bigotry have no place in the human  
22 endeavor--are being taught to new generations of young Texans, and  
23 his work toward this end has made a lasting and positive difference  
24 in the community; now, therefore, be it

25 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 82nd Texas  
26 Legislature hereby pay tribute to Henry Kellen for his  
27 establishment of the El Paso Holocaust Museum and Study Center and

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1 for his efforts to heighten awareness of this dark chapter in world  
2 history among the citizens of El Paso and beyond; and, be it further

3       RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be  
4 prepared for Mr. Kellen as an expression of high regard by the Texas  
5 House of Representatives.