

By: Simpson

H.C.R. No. 23

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1           WHEREAS, During the Great Texas Balloon Race held every  
2 summer, the skies over Gregg County burst with vivid color as hot  
3 air balloon pilots from around the country race these graceful  
4 giants; and

5           WHEREAS, This topflight contest originated in 1978 as a  
6 promotion to advertise the grand opening of Longview Mall; the  
7 inaugural event featured 20 balloons and was organized by Dr.  
8 William Bussey, a dentist and renowned hot air balloonist with 29  
9 U.S. and 14 world records, along with Longview Mall managers  
10 Frankie Parson Riggins and Mary LeTourneau; in 1981, Dr. Bussey  
11 pioneered another popular tradition, the balloon glow, a practice  
12 now copied at celebrations the world over; the glow entails firing  
13 the burners of tethered hot air balloons so that they glimmer like  
14 lanterns illuminating the night; and

15           WHEREAS, Through the years, the race has changed locations to  
16 accommodate the number of spectators that come to enjoy the  
17 weekend's attractions, which have grown to include special shape  
18 balloons, concerts, arts and crafts, and children's activities;  
19 Gregg County judge Bill Stoudt was instrumental in garnering  
20 support for the race from the beginning, and, in 1989, he figured  
21 prominently in establishing a new fly site at the East Texas  
22 Regional Airport, then known as the Gregg County Airport, where the  
23 race continues to take place to this day; and

24           WHEREAS, Valued by individuals and businesses across the

1 county, the Great Texas Balloon Race is endorsed by the Cities of  
2 Longview, Kilgore, and Gladewater, and each of those cities'  
3 chambers of commerce and visitors bureaus; in addition, hundreds of  
4 local residents volunteer, and tens of thousands of people attend  
5 the race each year, bringing many visitors to East Texas and  
6 significantly benefiting the region's economy; and

7 WHEREAS, Dozens of balloons will take to the skies for the  
8 Great Texas Balloon Race in 2013, and because Gregg County was  
9 selected by the Balloon Federation of America to host the U.S.  
10 National Championships from 2012 to 2014, this year will also  
11 showcase the nation's best pilots as they begin their quest for the  
12 world title; and

13 WHEREAS, The race's competitions and entertainment have long  
14 been a popular attraction for area residents and visitors alike,  
15 and its significance was formally recognized in 1985 when the  
16 legislature declared August 19-25 as Great Texas Balloon Race Week  
17 and Governor Mark White honored Longview as the Balloon Capital of  
18 Texas by gubernatorial proclamation; and

19 WHEREAS, For nearly four decades, skilled hot air balloon  
20 pilots from the Lone Star State and beyond have joined countless  
21 enthusiasts in Gregg County to celebrate the Great Texas Balloon  
22 Race; this cherished tradition has brought majestic beauty,  
23 thrilling competition, and valuable commerce to the area, and it is  
24 indeed deserving of official recognition; now, therefore, be it

25 RESOLVED, That the 83rd Legislature of the State of Texas  
26 hereby commemorate the 36th anniversary of the Great Texas Balloon  
27 Race and declare Gregg County the Balloon Race Capital of Texas.