

By: Nevarez

H.R. No. 1392

R E S O L U T I O N

1           WHEREAS, On September 1, 2013, McDonald Observatory in Jeff  
2 Davis County is initiating a yearlong celebration of the 75th  
3 anniversary of the dedication of its first telescope and the 50th  
4 anniversary of its affiliation with The University of Texas at  
5 Austin; and

6           WHEREAS, One of the great centers for astronomical research  
7 and education in the world, McDonald Observatory was founded as the  
8 result of a bequest by Texas banker William Johnson McDonald and  
9 situated far from city lights on Mount Locke in the Davis Mountains,  
10 under the clear, dark skies of West Texas; and

11           WHEREAS, The observatory's first instrument, a 2.1-meter  
12 reflecting telescope, was dedicated on May 5, 1939; it was the  
13 second-largest telescope in the world at the time, and it was later  
14 named for the observatory's first director, the eminent Russian  
15 astronomer Otto Struve, who served from 1932 until 1950; originally  
16 run under contract by the University of Chicago, the observatory  
17 was taken over by The University of Texas in 1963; the first UT  
18 director was Dr. Harlan J. Smith, who served for the next quarter of  
19 a century; and

20           WHEREAS, Over the years, the Otto Struve Telescope has been  
21 joined by the 2.7-meter Harlan J. Smith Telescope on Mount Locke  
22 and the 9.2-meter Hobby-Eberly Telescope on the adjacent Mount  
23 Fowlkes, as well as by a variety of smaller, more specialized  
24 instruments; astronomers from around the world have used these

1 telescopes to make important discoveries about planetary systems,  
2 stellar spectroscopy, the interstellar medium, and extragalactic  
3 astronomy; and

4 WHEREAS, During the observatory's anniversary year, the  
5 Hobby-Eberly Telescope Dark Energy Experiment (HETDEX) will map the  
6 three-dimensional positions of 1 million galaxies up to 11 million  
7 light years away, yielding the largest map of the universe ever  
8 produced and helping to establish the nature of dark energy, one of  
9 the greatest mysteries in science today; The University of Texas is  
10 also a partner in the Giant Magellan Telescope project, which will  
11 create a new generation of earth-based telescopes using 7 mirrors  
12 to make up an optical surface 80 feet across, with 10 times the  
13 resolving power of the Hubble Space Telescope; and

14 WHEREAS, In addition to its leadership in research, McDonald  
15 Observatory is one of the Lone Star State's great resources for  
16 teachers, students, and the public; 60,000 visitors a year enjoy  
17 the observatory tour, the exhibits in the Frank N. Bash Visitors  
18 Center, and the public star-viewing parties every Tuesday, Friday,  
19 and Saturday; the observatory regularly hosts continuing education  
20 programs for teachers and activities for K-12 students; and

21 WHEREAS, McDonald Observatory also reaches a national  
22 audience with its popular *StarDate* radio program, the  
23 longest-running science feature in the country, playing daily on  
24 more than 300 stations nationwide; *StarDate* magazine, originally  
25 founded as *McDonald Observatory News* in 1973, has been a color,  
26 bimonthly magazine since 1988, and the *StarDate* website offers  
27 sky-watching tips and news about the observatory to people around

1 the world; and

2 WHEREAS, For three quarters of a century, McDonald  
3 Observatory has actively participated in some of the most  
4 staggering scientific discoveries of modern times and enriched the  
5 lives of countless visitors with its innovative education programs,  
6 and its continuing efforts to push the boundaries of the human  
7 understanding of the cosmos are truly worthy of recognition on this  
8 special anniversary; now, therefore, be it

9 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 83rd Texas  
10 Legislature hereby commemorate the 75th anniversary of the  
11 dedication of the first telescope at McDonald Observatory and  
12 extend to the observatory's scientists, technicians, and staff  
13 sincere best wishes for continued success with their exciting work;  
14 and, be it further

15 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be  
16 prepared for McDonald Observatory as an expression of high regard  
17 by the Texas House of Representatives.