

By: M. Gonzalez of El Paso

H.R. No. 2671

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, Each year, the community of San Elizario pays
2 tribute to an important early chapter in the history of Texas and
3 the southwestern United States with the First Thanksgiving
4 Celebration of Cultures Conference and Commemoration; and

5 WHEREAS, The festival looks back at events that took place in
6 1598, when a colonizing expedition under the command of Juan de
7 Onate made an arduous crossing of the Chihuahuan desert in northern
8 Mexico and arrived on the banks of the Rio Grande near the site of
9 present-day San Elizario; the group held a feast on April 30 to give
10 thanks for the survival of expedition members, and that celebration
11 is considered by many people to be the first Thanksgiving in North
12 America, having taken place 23 years before the Pilgrim settlers of
13 the Plymouth Colony in New England held a similar observance; the
14 meal was also significant because Juan de Onate used the occasion to
15 formally claim the lands drained by the Rio Grande for the Kingdom
16 of Spain; and

17 WHEREAS, Modern-day residents of the El Paso area began
18 commemorating the First Thanksgiving in 1989; that year, more than
19 100 costumed participants reenacted the historical feast at the
20 Chamizal National Memorial, with members of the Tigua Indian
21 community playing the parts of the Native Americans who had
22 assisted the Spanish expedition after its arrival at the Rio
23 Grande; the observance was attended by officials from Mexico and
24 the United States as well as by a direct descendant of Juan de

1 Onate, and a fiesta took place in San Elizario to coincide with the
2 event; and

3 WHEREAS, That initial reenactment has evolved into the First
4 Thanksgiving Celebration of Cultures Conference and Commemoration,
5 which is sponsored each spring by the San Elizario Genealogy and
6 Historical Society and by the El Paso Mission Trail Association;
7 this fun and informative gathering includes lectures, musical
8 performances, dance presentations, and arts and historical
9 displays in addition to the re-creation of the feast; and

10 WHEREAS, The lands now encompassed by the State of Texas
11 played a prominent role in the early colonization of North America,
12 and the organizers of the First Thanksgiving celebration are
13 deserving of recognition for helping to focus public attention on
14 that rich historical saga; now, therefore, be it

15 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 83rd Texas
16 Legislature hereby honor the First Thanksgiving Celebration of
17 Cultures Conference and Commemoration and commend the residents of
18 San Elizario, the community's Genealogy and Historical Society, and
19 the El Paso Mission Trail Association for hosting this outstanding
20 event.