

By: Alonzo

H.R. No. 79

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, June 15, 2016, will mark 28 years since the passing
2 of William C. Velasquez, founder of the Southwest Voter
3 Registration Education Project, and this solemn anniversary offers
4 a fitting opportunity to pay tribute to the achievements of a voting
5 rights pioneer and revered son of the Lone Star State; and

6 WHEREAS, Born in 1944, Willie Velasquez graduated from
7 Central Catholic High School in San Antonio and then attended St.
8 Mary's University; his dedication to furthering the civil rights of
9 Hispanic Americans was already evident in his college years when he
10 helped found the Mexican American Youth Organization at St. Mary's
11 and also worked as an organizer for the United Farm Workers Union;
12 and

13 WHEREAS, Prominent in a number of Latino political
14 organizations of the late 1960s and early 1970s, Mr. Velasquez
15 helped lay the groundwork for La Raza Unida, a political party
16 championing the rights of Mexican Americans, and for the National
17 Council of La Raza, which has become an important civil rights and
18 advocacy group; and

19 WHEREAS, Mr. Velasquez focused on Latino participation in
20 elections as part of his work for the council, and these efforts led
21 to the founding of the Southwest Voter Registration Education
22 Project in 1974; uniting behind the slogan *Su Voto es Su Voz*, "Your
23 Vote is Your Voice," SVREP set out to educate Hispanics about the
24 democratic process and urge them to take part in elections; by

1 conducting thousands of nonpartisan voter registration and
2 get-out-the-vote campaigns, SVREP has helped bring about a dramatic
3 increase in the number of Latino voters and Latino elected
4 officials, both in Texas and across the United States; and

5 WHEREAS, Willie Velasquez also realized the need for an
6 organization that could gauge Hispanic public opinion and share
7 those views with elected leaders; toward that end, he founded the
8 Southwest Voter Research Institute in 1984; now renamed the William
9 C. Velasquez Institute, it collects and distributes information on
10 public policy issues that impact Latino citizens, thereby
11 amplifying their voice in the dialog of American politics; and

12 WHEREAS, The untimely death of Mr. Velasquez in 1988 at the
13 age of 44 was a loss deeply felt throughout the country, but his
14 legacy lives on; in 1995, President Bill Clinton posthumously
15 awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest
16 civilian honor, and he was one of the civil rights figures whose
17 names were attached to the U.S. Senate version of the Voting Rights
18 Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006; and

19 WHEREAS, Willie Velasquez is a figure of great importance for
20 Americans; his efforts to expand the electorate and educate
21 citizens about a range of civic issues were a great and influential
22 contribution that continues to benefit all those throughout this
23 country who are committed to the concept of representative
24 democracy; now, therefore, be it

25 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 84th Texas
26 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the life of William C. Velasquez
27 on June 15, 2016, the 28th anniversary of his death, and commemorate

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1 his record of achievement in furthering the nation's democratic
2 tradition.