

By: Alonzo

H.R. No. 711

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, Reies López Tijerina, a civil rights activist and a
2 central figure in the Chicano land grant movement, passed away on
3 January 19, 2015, at the age of 88; and

4 WHEREAS, Reies Tijerina was born on September 21, 1926, near
5 Falls City, to a family of migrant workers of Spanish-Mexican and
6 indigenous descent; he began working the fields at the age of four
7 and learned of injustices experienced by Mexican migrants,
8 including the near-lynching of his grandfather, and those memories
9 kindled his desire for political change; and

10 WHEREAS, While a young man, Mr. Tijerina studied at the
11 Assemblies of God Bible Institute and briefly served as a
12 Pentecostal minister before helping to establish a cooperative
13 village in Arizona; in 1957, he settled in New Mexico, and it was
14 there that he became involved with the cause that would guide the
15 course of his life; he was moved by the plight of families in the
16 area whose land had been confiscated by Anglo surveyors after the
17 signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, and he joined
18 them in petitioning the Mexican government to help resolve their
19 grievances; and

20 WHEREAS, Believing that the historical dispossession of land
21 rights was a major cause of poverty for many Mexicans, Mr. Tijerina
22 founded La Alianza Federal de Mercedes in 1963 and began a campaign
23 to compel the U.S. government to investigate treaty violations; he
24 led the group in an act of civil disobedience at the Echo

1 Amphitheater in northern New Mexico and orchestrated a
2 confrontation at a New Mexico courthouse with the intent of
3 performing a citizen's arrest of the local district attorney; he
4 was found not guilty for charges brought concerning his involvement
5 in the raid but ultimately sentenced to a year in jail for
6 destruction of federal property; and

7 WHEREAS, Mr. Tijerina continued to dedicate himself to
8 advancing social progress for Latinos; he worked to heighten
9 awareness of discrimination and promote economic opportunity, and
10 he championed the rights of Hispanic Americans to speak Spanish and
11 preserve their culture and heritage; moreover, his message became a
12 catalyst for years of legal battles over land ownership claims; and

13 WHEREAS, A fiery orator who drew on his days as an evangelist,
14 Mr. Tijerina appeared at numerous speaking engagements up until the
15 date of his passing; he was among the first Chicano activists to
16 align with African American civil rights leaders, and following an
17 invitation from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., he served as the Latino
18 leader of the 1968 Poor People's Campaign march at the nation's
19 capital; and

20 WHEREAS, Mr. Tijerina spent the final decade of his life in
21 El Paso, and he published an autobiography, *They Called Me "King
22 Tiger": My Struggle for the Land and Our Rights*; in 2009, he was
23 recognized for his life's work by the Mexican Consulate in El Paso,
24 and he was presented with a key to the city of Las Vegas, New Mexico,
25 in 2011; he is survived by his wife, Esperanza, and 8 of his 10
26 children; and

27 WHEREAS, Reies Tijerina was unflinching in his quest to

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1 secure for his people the full rights of citizenship, and he leaves
2 behind a legacy that will long endure; now, therefore, be it

3 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 84th Texas
4 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the memory of Reies López
5 Tijerina and extend deepest condolences to all those who mourn his
6 passing.