

By: Naishtat

H.R. No. 1736

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, The people of Texas lost a visionary steward of the
2 state's resources with the passing of former land commissioner and
3 state representative Robert Landis Armstrong of Austin on March 1,
4 2015, at the age of 82; and

5 WHEREAS, Bob Armstrong began his long career in public
6 service as an assistant attorney general, and he was elected to the
7 Texas Legislature in 1962; one of that body's earliest champions of
8 the environment, he created the Interagency Council on Natural
9 Resources, the Texas State Parks Advisory Committee, and the Texas
10 Conservation Foundation; he also carried the constitutional
11 amendment allowing the Permanent University Fund to diversify its
12 portfolio by investing in stocks as well as bonds; and

13 WHEREAS, Elected land commissioner in 1970, Mr. Armstrong
14 increased the Permanent University Fund by billions of dollars as
15 chair of the Board for Lease of University Lands; he raised royalty
16 payments to the fund and saved the state some \$300 million by
17 shielding state and university lands from federal attempts to
18 collect windfall profits tax; in addition, he played a key role in
19 the crafting of the Coastal Zone Management Program; and

20 WHEREAS, This dynamic Texan was appointed to the Parks and
21 Wildlife Commission in 1985, when the state ranked a dismal 47th in
22 the nation in park acreage per person; accomplishing a long-held
23 dream, he guided the purchase of 212,000 acres for Big Bend Ranch
24 State Park, which doubled the state's total park acreage; he was

1 later appointed natural resources and energy advisor to Governor
2 Ann Richards; during the Clinton administration, he served for five
3 years as assistant secretary for land and minerals management at
4 the United States Department of the Interior, with responsibility
5 for the Bureau of Land Management, the Minerals Management Service,
6 and the Office of Surface Mining; and

7 WHEREAS, After returning to Austin, Mr. Armstrong served on a
8 number of presidential committees regarding land and resource
9 management; he continued to work in behalf of conservation
10 organizations, including the local chapter of the Sierra Club,
11 which he had established in 1968, and the Texas Parks and Wildlife
12 Foundation, of which he was a founding member; he remained involved
13 with the Western States Land Commissioners Association, which he
14 had served as president, and he was on the board of Trustees for
15 Alaska, a nonprofit environmental law firm; moreover, he gave
16 generously of his time and expertise to the board of The First Tee
17 of Greater Austin, an organization that teaches golf and life
18 skills to disadvantaged youth; and

19 WHEREAS, Mr. Armstrong was the recipient of numerous
20 accolades, among them the Field and Stream Conservation Award, the
21 Nature Conservancy President's Public Service Award, the Texas
22 Nature Conservancy Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Chevron
23 Conservation Award; in 2014, the headquarters building at Big Bend
24 Ranch State Park was renamed the Bob Armstrong Visitor Center; he
25 further held a distinction best appreciated by his fellow Austin
26 natives, namely, a popular queso dip named in his honor at the
27 iconic Matt's El Rancho restaurant; and

1 WHEREAS, The only child of Robert and Louise Armstrong,
2 Mr. Armstrong was born on November 7, 1932; he graduated from The
3 University of Texas at Austin and served his country as a lieutenant
4 in the U.S. Navy for two years before completing his law degree at
5 UT; and

6 WHEREAS, A gifted consensus builder, Bob Armstrong combined a
7 strong sense of purpose and a formidable work ethic with a warm,
8 easy-going manner and respect for all viewpoints; although he will
9 be deeply missed by those who were privileged to share in the
10 richness of his life, his tremendous legacy of achievement will
11 continue to benefit the citizens of Texas for years to come; now,
12 therefore, be it

13 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 84th Texas
14 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the memory of Robert Landis
15 Armstrong and extend sincere condolences to the members of his
16 family: to his wife of 31 years, Linda Aaker; to his children,
17 Martha Louise, Shannon, Landis, and Will; to his grandsons, Landis
18 and Finn Hagerty; and to his many other relatives and friends; and,
19 be it further

20 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
21 prepared for the members of his family and that when the Texas House
22 of Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Bob
23 Armstrong.