

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, On September 8, 1849, Major Jefferson Van Horne and
2 a contingent of U.S. Army troops arrived in the vicinity of
3 present-day El Paso to establish a post on the Rio Grande, the first
4 American military encampment in an area that has hosted U.S. armed
5 forces now for more than a century and a half; and

6 WHEREAS, A native of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, Jefferson
7 Van Horne was born to Dorothy Johns Marple Van Horne and General
8 Isaac Van Horne, a veteran of the American Revolution; following
9 the family tradition of military service, he graduated from the
10 United States Military Academy at West Point in 1827 and upheld its
11 motto of "Duty, Honor, Country" throughout his life; and

12 WHEREAS, His early assignments included frontier duty at
13 Jefferson Barracks in Missouri and a tour at Fort Smith, Arkansas;
14 from 1846 to 1848, he served his country in the Mexican War, and his
15 distinguished efforts earned him promotion to the rank of major;
16 and

17 WHEREAS, While on leave in his hometown of Zanesville, Ohio,
18 Jefferson Van Horne met Mary Gilbert, and after exchanging romantic
19 letters for two years, the couple were married on November 28, 1850;
20 they had one son, Lewis Cass Van Horne; and

21 WHEREAS, In May 1849, Major Van Horne was instructed to
22 establish a military post on the north bank of the Rio Grande,
23 opposite what is now Ciudad Juarez, for the purpose of protecting
24 both settlers in the area and travelers bound for California from

1 Indian attack; he departed Camp Salado, on the outskirts of San
2 Antonio, on June 1, commanding regimental staff, six companies of
3 the Third Infantry, and a howitzer battery; his party of nearly 260
4 soldiers was accompanied by some 100 civilians who played a
5 supporting role; and

6 WHEREAS, With 275 wagons, the expedition represented the
7 longest wagon train to embark westward across Texas; after 100 days
8 and a 643-mile overland march, Major Van Horne and his men reached
9 their destination on September 8, 1849; Major Van Horne
10 subsequently quartered four companies at Coon's Rancho, where
11 downtown El Paso now stands, and sent two companies to garrison the
12 old Spanish presidio at San Elizario, 20 miles to the southeast; and

13 WHEREAS, In September 1851, the War Department closed both
14 the post at Coon's Rancho and the presidio and ordered Major Van
15 Horne and most of his troops to Fort Fillmore, 40 miles north of El
16 Paso, near Mesilla, New Mexico; Major Van Horne had recruiting duty
17 from 1852 to 1854, and between 1855 and 1857 he served at Fort
18 Stanton, New Mexico, and at the Post of Albuquerque; he died in
19 Albuquerque on September 26, 1857; and

20 WHEREAS, A new army post was established on the site of
21 present-day El Paso in January 1854, and in March of that year it
22 was named Fort Bliss after Lieutenant Colonel William Bliss, a
23 career army officer and an accomplished scholar who was also the
24 son-in-law of President Zachary Taylor; the fort acquired a
25 permanent location in El Paso in 1893; and

26 WHEREAS, The post that Major Jefferson Van Horne established
27 at the site of present-day El Paso served to protect a vital route

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1 for a dynamic and burgeoning nation pushing westward and marked the
2 beginning of a long and close association between the United States
3 military and the people of El Paso, and it is indeed fitting that
4 the anniversary of his arrival at the Pass of the North be
5 commemorated; now, therefore, be it

6 RESOLVED, That the 84th Legislature of the State of Texas
7 hereby designate September 8 as Major Jefferson Van Horne Day in the
8 State of Texas; and, be it further

9 RESOLVED, That, in accordance with the provisions of Section
10 391.004(d), Government Code, this designation remain in effect
11 until the 10th anniversary of the date this resolution is finally
12 passed by the legislature.