

**SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 656**

**WHEREAS**, The Senate of the State of Texas is pleased to recognize the value and the beauty of the dark night skies over Big Bend Ranch State Park; and

**WHEREAS**, Big Bend Ranch State Park is the largest state park in Texas; it covers 311,000 acres in West Texas between Presidio and Lajitas; the park is bordered on the south by Farm to Market Road 170, which runs along the Rio Grande and the international boundary to Mexico; and

**WHEREAS**, In addition to excellent stargazing, the park offers visitors the opportunity to enjoy hiking trails, mountain biking, recreation areas, primitive camping, and river access; and

**WHEREAS**, Big Bend Ranch State Park has received worldwide recognition for having some of the darkest night skies in the world; with a night sky rating of Class 1, or "absolute darkest skies" on the Bortle Light Pollution Scale, the park offers the perfect venue for astronomical observations; and

**WHEREAS**, In an effort to preserve the view at night, seven counties and their cities in the Big Bend area have passed ordinances against avoidable light pollution; these efforts have focused on eliminating light sources that hamper observations of the night sky, such as those carried out at the McDonald Observatory, one of the state's most valuable assets, which is located near Fort Davis; and

**WHEREAS**, The dark skies of Big Bend allow everyone to become an astronomer and to view millions of stars otherwise obscured by the light pollution that plagues modern society; and

**WHEREAS**, Big Bend Ranch State Park is located near the border city of Ojinaga, Chihuahua, Mexico; our good neighbors to the south have also taken steps to reduce light pollution and save electrical energy by installing 1,000 light-emitting diode downward-oriented street lights, with more reduced lighting to come; and

**WHEREAS**, Tourism is the lifeblood of the Big Bend area's economy, and it is important to be able to market Big Bend Ranch State Park as a year-round astronomy destination for such events as star parties, amateur astronomer gatherings, nighttime photography sessions, and school or university field trips as well as for general tourism; the renewed focus on the Dark Skies of Texas will bring new jobs and revenue to an otherwise under-utilized area of Texas; and

**WHEREAS**, The City of Presidio and Big Bend Ranch State Park are hosting the Texas Dark Skies Festival on the last weekend of October; the festival features activities related to astronomy, outer space, science fiction, and other "out of this world" topics and is being held on Halloween weekends concurrent with

Presidio's annual "Dude of the Dead" Music Festival; these events combine education, fun, food, and music into a massive Border Zone event for all to enjoy under the Dark Skies of Texas; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, That the Senate of the State of Texas, 84th Legislature, hereby recognize the Dark Skies of Texas at Big Bend Ranch State Park and commend the surrounding communities for their efforts to preserve this valuable and unique Texas treasure.

Rodríguez

---

President of the Senate

I hereby certify that the above Resolution was adopted by the Senate on April 30, 2015.

---

Secretary of the Senate

---

Member, Texas Senate