

By: Clardy

H.R. No. 394

R E S O L U T I O N

1           WHEREAS, In observance of the 80th anniversary of the New  
2 London school explosion, the London Ex-Student and Memorial  
3 Association, the West Rusk Alumni Association, and the New London  
4 Museum are hosting a Day of Remembrance and All-School Reunion on  
5 March 18, 2017; and

6           WHEREAS, In 1937, New London, Texas, boasted one of the most  
7 prosperous rural school districts in the nation, thanks to the  
8 area's booming oil fields, and community residents took pride in  
9 their new state-of-the-art school building; and

10           WHEREAS, Shortly after three o'clock on the afternoon of  
11 March 18, children were preparing for an upcoming interscholastic  
12 meet in a nearby town when a shop instructor switched on a sanding  
13 machine; unbeknownst to anyone, a natural gas leak had filled the  
14 school's basement with an incendiary mix of gas and air, and the  
15 machine's spark ignited an explosion that destroyed the school in  
16 an instant, collapsing the walls and bringing the roof down upon the  
17 children and teachers below; the explosion was heard four miles  
18 away, and a two-ton slab of concrete was hurled 200 feet, crushing a  
19 car; and

20           WHEREAS, Hundreds of frantic parents and community members  
21 rushed to the scene, and some 1,500 roughnecks from the nearby  
22 oilfields dropped their work to join in the rescue and recovery  
23 effort; within an hour, Governor James Allred had sent the Texas  
24 Rangers and the highway patrol to lend assistance; and

1           WHEREAS, Of the 500 students and 40 teachers in the building  
2 at the time, nearly 300 died; the new Mother Francis Hospital in  
3 Tyler canceled its dedication ceremony to treat the injured, and  
4 the Texas Funeral Directors Association sent 25 embalmers to the  
5 scene; the disaster became international news, drawing journalists  
6 from around the nation, including a young Walter Cronkite; and

7           WHEREAS, In the aftermath of the explosion, the Texas  
8 Legislature passed a law requiring that a distinctive scent be  
9 added to natural gas so that future tragedies of that nature might  
10 be avoided; today, the worst school disaster in U.S. history is  
11 recorded in the exhibits of the New London Museum and remembered  
12 with a cenotaph displaying the names of all those who lost their  
13 lives; and

14           WHEREAS, The memory of this horrific tragedy reminds us of  
15 the fragility of life, but it also serves as a testament to the  
16 power of community, and even as we pay tribute to the lives that  
17 were lost, we also honor the heroic efforts of all those who rushed  
18 to their aid; now, therefore, be it

19           RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 85th Texas  
20 Legislature hereby commemorate the 80th anniversary of the New  
21 London school explosion and extend to all those associated with the  
22 Day of Remembrance sincere best wishes for a meaningful and  
23 memorable event; and, be it further

24           RESOLVED, That official copies of this resolution be prepared  
25 for the London Ex-Student and Memorial Association, the West Rusk  
26 Alumni Association, and the New London Museum as an expression of  
27 high regard by the Texas House of Representatives.