

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 257

WHEREAS, The Republic of Texas Museum is commemorating the La Salle expedition with a wreath-laying ceremony at the Texas State Cemetery in Austin on February 23, 2017; and

WHEREAS, In 1684, the French explorer René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle, set sail for North America with 400 people and four ships, intending to establish a colony on the Mississippi River; the group failed to find the Mississippi, however, and landed instead at Matagorda Bay, where La Salle and some 180 colonists disembarked in February 1685; by that time, the *Belle* was the only ship that remained to them, but in late 1686 it too was lost when it was wrecked in a storm and sank off Matagorda Peninsula; the following year, La Salle was killed, and sometime around Christmas 1688, what remained of his small colony was overrun by the Karankawas; and

WHEREAS, La Salle's failed expedition revealed French interest in settling the Gulf Coast, which in turn focused Spain's attention on East Texas and spurred the creation of Spanish settlements there; short-lived though La Salle's colony was, it provided France with a claim to Texas, and for more than a century, the perception of a French threat would continue to haunt Spain and influence the course of events in its territory north of the Rio Grande; and

WHEREAS, In 1995, archaeologists located the wreck of the *Belle* on the muddy bottom of Matagorda Bay and began excavation of the site; to accomplish their task, they installed a cofferdam around the ship that allowed them to work on relatively dry ground,

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scoring a technical first in maritime archaeology; they eventually recovered the remains of the ship's hull as well as 1.6 million artifacts that help tell the complex story of a bygone era of exploration and colonization; and

WHEREAS, The La Salle expedition represents a pivotal moment in the history of the Lone Star State, and the *Belle*, now preserved in the Bullock Texas State History Museum in Austin, has offered both invaluable lessons in archaeological methods and critical insights into one of the most compelling chapters from our past; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of the State of Texas, 85th Legislature, hereby recognize February 23, 2017, as *La Belle* Day at the State Capitol.

Bettencourt

President of the Senate

I hereby certify that the above Resolution was adopted by the Senate on February 21, 2017.

Secretary of the Senate

Member, Texas Senate