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By:  Muñoz, Jr. H.C.R. No. 72

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Section 231 of the appropriations bill passed by the U.S. Congress on February 14, 2019, prohibits the use of funds made available through that act or prior acts for the construction of a barrier through La Lomita Historical Park in Mission; and

WHEREAS, A religious center for more than 150 years, La Lomita was visited frequently in the mid-19th century by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, who traveled the Rio Grande Valley to perform baptisms, marriage ceremonies, and other rites for remote communities; the land's owner, a devout Catholic, welcomed the construction of a chapel in 1865 and bequeathed his ranch to the Oblate Fathers; a town grew up around the chapel, and when the city of Mission was founded in 1908, its name was chosen to honor the religious settlement; and

WHEREAS, After the original church building was destroyed in a flood, dedicated parishioners replaced it; the present-day chapel dates to the early 20th century, and in 1964, it was recorded as an Official Texas Historic Landmark; recognizing the central role of Catholic missions in the settlement of the region, the entire La Lomita Historic District is listed in the National Register of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, Lovingly restored through the years, La Lomita Chapel continues to serve as a shrine owned by the Catholic Diocese of Brownsville; parishioners, area residents, and visitors were therefore deeply dismayed by the federal government's proposal to build a massive border wall through La Lomita Park; the diocese deems such a barrier inconsistent with Catholic teachings, and while disturbing the sanctity of the site, it would also cut the chapel off from the community, leaving it isolated between the wall and the Rio Grande; were the government to assert eminent domain to seize the land, it would violate both the First Amendment right to free exercise of religion and the provisions of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act; and

WHEREAS, Countless Texans have practiced their faith at La Lomita Chapel over the course of its long history, and Congress demonstrated its abiding respect for religious freedom by prohibiting the use of funds for the construction of a barrier through the surrounding park; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the 86th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby respectfully urge the president of the United States and the United States Congress to continue to protect La Lomita Historical Park; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Texas secretary of state forward official

copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, to the president of the Senate and the speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress, and to all the members of the Texas delegation to Congress with the request that this resolution be entered in the Congressional Record as a memorial to the Congress of the United States of America.