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R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, Telecommunications professionals representing small rural providers are gathering in Austin on February 19, 2019, to celebrate their important contributions to the prosperity of the Lone Star State; and

WHEREAS, Nearly 85 percent of Texas is considered rural; encompassing 142 million acres in 172 counties, these areas are home to more than 3.2 million people, the largest rural population in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Each year, more than $200 billion of the state's gross domestic product is generated by such traditionally rural industries as agriculture, forestry, hunting, and oil and gas production, and these enterprises depend upon the latest modern communications technology; and

WHEREAS, In response to the need of these industries and their communities, 44 small and rural incumbent local exchange carriers are bringing a high-quality telecommunications network to the vast rural expanse of the state, including remote regions that are most expensive to serve; and

WHEREAS, This state-of-the-art network provides critical infrastructure for education, economic development, health care, law enforcement, and border security; in addition, these carriers support more than 6,300 jobs and are responsible for a direct and indirect economic impact of over $2.5 billion; and

WHEREAS, Small and rural incumbent local exchange carriers play a vital role in the dynamic 21st-century Texas economy, and they are truly deserving of special recognition for their accomplishments and contributions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 86th Texas Legislature hereby recognize February 19, 2019, as Small and Rural Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers Day at the State Capitol and extend to the visiting telecommunications professionals sincere best wishes for their stay in Austin.