

By: Canales

H.R. No. 140

R E S O L U T I O N

1           WHEREAS, The life and achievements of the Honorable José  
2 Tomás Canales, a former state representative and civil rights  
3 trailblazer, are being honored on the 100th anniversary of his  
4 landmark 1919 investigation of the Texas Rangers; and

5           WHEREAS, Born into a prominent Nueces County ranching family  
6 in 1877, J. T. Canales earned his law degree from the University of  
7 Michigan; from 1900 to 1903, he practiced in Corpus Christi and  
8 Laredo before settling in Brownsville, where he spent the next two  
9 decades as a lawyer and a public official; and

10           WHEREAS, In addition to serving as superintendent of the  
11 Cameron County public schools and as a county judge, Mr. Canales  
12 spent five terms as a member of the Texas House of Representatives,  
13 holding office from 1905 to 1911 and from 1917 to 1921; the only  
14 Hispanic state representative at the time, he provided an important  
15 voice for the diverse populations living in the Lower Rio Grande  
16 Valley; and

17           WHEREAS, One of Representative Canales's most notable  
18 accomplishments was his 1919 investigation into the Texas Rangers  
19 for their actions during the 1910s, in particular the massacre of 15  
20 unarmed ethnic Mexican men and boys; the Canales Investigation, as  
21 it became known, shined a light on the excessive violence carried  
22 out by the Rangers against residents of Mexican descent, which  
23 resulted in as many as 5,000 deaths between 1914 and 1919; though he  
24 faced opposition and death threats for his efforts, Representative

1 Canales outlined numerous instances of misconduct by members of the  
2 law enforcement agency, and the investigation ultimately resulted  
3 in the force being reorganized and reduced in number; and

4 WHEREAS, Representative Canales decided not to seek  
5 reelection in 1920 and retired from state office, but he remained  
6 active in Hispanic civil rights initiatives; he was integral to the  
7 founding of the League of United Latin American Citizens, and he  
8 served as Brownsville city attorney and chaired the Texas Council  
9 on Human Rights; a lifelong believer in the importance of  
10 accessible, high-quality education, he wrote numerous articles and  
11 books about Mexican American history and the development of South  
12 Texas; he passed away in Brownsville on March 30, 1976, at the age  
13 of 99; and

14 WHEREAS, J. T. Canales was a pioneering figure in the  
15 struggle for social justice in the Lone Star State, and his vision  
16 and leadership remain a continuing source of inspiration; now,  
17 therefore, be it

18 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 86th Texas  
19 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the legacy of José Tomás Canales  
20 and commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Canales Investigation.