

By: Martinez Fischer

H.R. No. 1730

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, Former state senator Joe J. Bernal has devoted his
2 life to expanding the horizons of opportunity for all Texans; and

3 WHEREAS, The son of Jose and Antonia Bernal, Joe Bernal was
4 born in San Antonio in 1927 and grew up with eight brothers and
5 sisters on the city's west side; after graduating from Lanier High
6 School, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and served as an infantryman in
7 Manila and Tokyo with the Headquarters Squadron, Pacific Air
8 Command; he attained the rank of sergeant before receiving his
9 honorable discharge at the age of 19; and

10 WHEREAS, Senator Bernal attended Trinity University through
11 the G.I. Bill and earned his bachelor's degree in sociology; after
12 teaching in the Kosciusko Independent School District for a year,
13 he went on to serve at Burleson Elementary School in Edgewood ISD
14 and then Crockett Elementary School in San Antonio ISD; along the
15 way, he earned a master's degree in education with a minor in social
16 work from Our Lady of the Lake College, and he was employed as a
17 social worker by the Inman Christian Center for four years; and

18 WHEREAS, In 1964, Joe Bernal was elected to the Texas House of
19 Representatives, and he worked tirelessly in behalf of an amendment
20 to the state constitution that allowed seniors who had lived in the
21 U.S. for more than 25 years to receive benefits regardless of their
22 citizenship status; voters in Bexar County sent him to the state
23 senate in 1966, and over the course of two terms in office, he
24 dedicated himself to increasing educational access and protecting

1 vulnerable members of society; in 1969, he overcame fierce
2 opposition to secure passage of the state's first bilingual
3 education act, and he helped the state obtain federal funding for
4 bilingual education; he was also instrumental in abolishing a law
5 against using languages other than English in the classroom;
6 moreover, he sponsored the bill establishing The University of
7 Texas at San Antonio and battled tenaciously to pass it, and he
8 achieved the same success with his bill founding the UTSA dental and
9 nursing schools; his legislative initiatives further included the
10 state's first minimum wage law, lesson-planning time for teachers,
11 state-supported kindergarten programs, and funding for a criminal
12 justice council; in addition, he chaired the Federal Programs and
13 Relations, Claims, and Poverty in Texas Committees and led the
14 Texas House and Senate Mexican American Caucus; and

15 WHEREAS, While making a tremendous impact as a lawmaker,
16 Senator Bernal was employed as executive director for the Guadalupe
17 Community Center and then for the Commission for Mexican American
18 Affairs; he later became director of the Bilingual Cost Analysis
19 Project of the Intercultural Development Research Association and a
20 regional director of ACTION, a federal agency that coordinated
21 volunteer opportunities; and

22 WHEREAS, Senator Bernal completed his doctoral degree in
23 cultural foundations in education at The University of Texas at
24 Austin, having written his dissertation on bilingual/bicultural
25 education; from the early 1980s into the 1990s, he served as
26 principal of Emma Frey Elementary School in Edgewood ISD and as
27 assistant superintendent for instructional services for Harlandale

1 ISD; in 1996, he was elected to the State Board of Education, and
2 over the next decade, he championed bilingual education and fought
3 to provide classrooms with Spanish-language textbooks and to have
4 the elementary curriculum translated into Spanish; in addition, his
5 efforts were crucial in bringing mariachi band competitions into
6 the University Interscholastic League; twice reelected to the
7 board, he served as its vice chair from 2001 to 2003 and chaired the
8 committee on instruction; and

9 WHEREAS, In 2014, Northside ISD named a new campus the
10 Dr. Joe J. Bernal Middle School; previously, he and his wife,
11 fellow educator Mary Esther Bernal, received the Lifetime
12 Achievement Award from the Mexican American Legal Defense and
13 Educational Fund for their efforts in behalf of the Latino
14 community; the couple have shared more than six decades of
15 marriage, and they are the parents of four children, Richard,
16 Patrick, Bernard, and Rebecca; and

17 WHEREAS, The destiny of a state is inextricably linked to the
18 quality and equality of its public education system, and through
19 his unyielding commitment to providing all Texans with a strong
20 foundation on which to build, Joe Bernal has enriched the lives of
21 innumerable people; now, therefore, be it

22 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 86th Texas
23 Legislature hereby honor former state senator Joe Bernal for his
24 outstanding contributions to the Lone Star State and extend to him
25 sincere best wishes for the future; and, be it further

26 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
27 prepared for Senator Bernal as an expression of high regard by the

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1 Texas House of Representatives.