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By:  Guerra H.R. No. 1779

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, In February 2021, Winter Storm Uri provided a harsh reminder of the fragility of the Texas power grid; and

WHEREAS, Record low temperatures created a catastrophic energy shortage as weather-related failures took down natural gas, nuclear, coal, wind, and solar generation; natural gas-fired power plants, which supply 46 percent of the state's electricity, ran out of fuel as pipelines and related equipment froze; and

WHEREAS, The geographical characteristics of Texas have created untapped geothermal resources that can increase energy options; geothermal, which generates energy using heat from the Earth's interior, is a reliable source that runs consistently regardless of weather conditions; it is clean, producing 95 percent fewer emissions than coal and 92 percent less than gas; moreover, it is endlessly renewable, as the superheated water can be injected back into the ground to run in a constant loop; and

WHEREAS, Texas has a long history with geothermal; the State Capitol was originally heated by geothermal water, and in the 1970s, the U.S. Department of Energy funded geothermal projects to provide space heating for the Falls Community Hospital in Marlin and Cotulla High School in the Eagle Ford Shale; geothermal resources along the Gulf Coast were catalogued and proven extractable in the 1970s and '80s, but such initiatives languished once oil prices sank; and

WHEREAS, Every oil and gas well brings geothermal heat to the surface as a byproduct; preliminary data collected by Southern Methodist University over 15 years ago indicated that up to 2,000 megawatts of geothermal energy could be available just from the state's then-extant oil and gas wells, and the subsequent fracking boom likely means that even more geothermal energy is available; geothermal technology can repurpose end-of-life oil and gas wells, alleviating the need for plugging, abandonment, or decommissioning while also supporting clean energy generation; and

WHEREAS, Geothermal energy development can also repurpose the skills and expertise of the state's oil and gas workers, which are readily transferable; in Canada, many former oil workers have already made this transition; geothermal applications will create independent energy resources and jobs in a rapidly changing industry, and with its well-trained workforce, as well as its geological advantages, Texas is poised to realize tremendous economic development through geothermal expansion; and

WHEREAS, Texas must diversify its energy portfolio in order to create a more resilient, responsive power grid and maintain its energy leadership and independence, and geothermal energy is a resource that can provide thousands of good jobs and attract millions in investments while achieving these goals; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 87th Texas Legislature hereby express support for geothermal energy production.