

By: Reynolds

H.C.R. No. 17

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1           WHEREAS, The convict leasing system that flourished in Texas  
2 in the late 19th and early 20th centuries began soon after the  
3 passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, which ended slavery or  
4 indentured servitude in the United States except as a punishment  
5 for a crime; and

6           WHEREAS, Faced with housing and feeding an exploding number  
7 of new prisoners due to laws that were used to unjustly incarcerate  
8 free blacks after the Civil War, the State of Texas began leasing  
9 state prisoners to private businesses in 1867; the state took a  
10 negligent role in ensuring that the prisoners were treated  
11 appropriately, and working conditions at the sugarcane  
12 plantations, stone quarries, iron foundries, and other dangerous  
13 places were inhumane; and

14           WHEREAS, The men and women who were victims of the state's  
15 convict leasing system suffered grievously, as shown in the remains  
16 of 95 African Americans that were discovered in 2018 on the grounds  
17 of the former Imperial Sugar Company State Prison Farm in Sugar  
18 Land; the remains indicate that amputations, bone breaks, extreme  
19 dehydration, mosquito-borne epidemics, frequent beatings, and a  
20 lack of medical care were common; and

21           WHEREAS, For more than 30 years, the state's convict leasing  
22 system, an offshoot of slavery, provided revenue to the State of  
23 Texas and allowed the state to largely avoid the cost of housing and  
24 feeding state prisoners; for the businesses that employed the

1 prisoners, the convict leasing system was also profitable, allowing  
2 the businesses to hire labor at a fraction of the appropriate cost;  
3 and

4 WHEREAS, By the time the Texas Legislature passed S.B. 10,  
5 Acts of the 31st Legislature, 4th Called Session, 1910, to end  
6 convict leasing, the Capitol, officially completed in 1888, had  
7 already been built with convict labor; records show that the red  
8 granite and limestone used to construct the building were quarried  
9 by state prisoners and that all of the ironworks, including the  
10 dome, columns, gates, and interior decorative features, were  
11 fabricated by state prisoners; and

12 WHEREAS, It is in the public's interest to create a plaque to  
13 inform visitors to the Capitol that the Capitol was built with  
14 convict labor and to show that the men and women who were victims of  
15 the state's convict leasing system played an important role in the  
16 history and economic development of Texas; now, therefore, be it

17 RESOLVED, That the 87th Legislature of the State of Texas  
18 hereby direct the State Preservation Board to initiate steps to  
19 provide for the replacement of the Children of the Confederacy  
20 plaque with a plaque to honor victims of the state's convict leasing  
21 system; and, be it further

22 RESOLVED, That the Texas secretary of state forward an  
23 official copy of this resolution to the executive director of the  
24 State Preservation Board.