By: Gámez H.C.R. No. 16

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The Texas sabal palm is a striking example of the unique plant species that have contributed to the rich ecological diversity of the Lone Star State through the centuries; and

WHEREAS, Native to the riparian forest of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, the Texas sabal palm is one of just three native palms found in the state; the species is distinguished by a stout, unarmed trunk that commonly grows to between 20 and 40 feet in height; crowned by a dense canopy of fan-shaped costapalmate leaves that can measure up to nine feet across, the Texas sabal palm serves as a nesting habitat for birds, and its dark, berrylike fruit provides a food source for these winged residents as well as a variety of other wildlife; and

WHEREAS, Historically widespread in South Texas, the palm caught the attention of early Spanish expeditions in the late 17th century, and the prominent stands of palms along the Rio Grande inspired them to dub the waterway "Rio de las Palmas"; both Native Americans and colonists used the trunks as supports for shelters and docks, and the leaves were woven into hats, baskets, mats, chair seats, and roof thatching; the presence of petrified palmwood, which was designated the official State Stone in 1969, further highlights the prominence of palms in the prehistoric landscape of Texas; and

WHEREAS, Today, the natural range of the Texas sabal palm is limited to Cameron and Hidalgo Counties, where it grows in moist,

alluvial soils along the Rio Grande and its tributaries; one of the best locations to view the trees is at the Sabal Palm Sanctuary in Brownsville, a 557-acre nature reserve that safeguards one of the last remaining native sabal palm groves in the United States; the Rio Grande riparian forest where the palms are found is classified as a globally imperiled environment, underscoring the ecological importance and vulnerability of the species; and

WHEREAS, The Texas sabal palm remains vital to the biodiversity of the South Texas ecosystem, and it is fitting that it be recognized as an important native species and a living symbol of the cultural, environmental, and natural history of the Lone Star State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the 90th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby designate the Texas sabal palm as the official State Palm of Texas.