

Tejano Monument – “It’s been a long time coming,” Gov. Perry says about vision pushed by Rep. Flores

By **DAVID A. DÍAZ**

A planned bronze monument that will honor the past and future contributions of Tejanos in Texas, an idea first successfully championed almost a decade ago by Rep. Ismael “Kino” Flores, D-Palmview, on Friday, May 29, was finally bestowed a place of honor on the historic south lawn of the Texas Capitol.

The monument, a planned artistic masterpiece being created by Laredo artist Armando Hinojosa, will be located on the southeast corner of the Texas Capitol grounds.

The Tejano Monument will become the latest addition to an exclusive club of shrines to the Lone State that will grace the south lawn, which also includes Heroes of the Alamo, Volunteer Firemen, Terry’s Texas Rangers, and Texas Cowboy.

“It’s been a long time coming – 500 years,” said Gov. Rick Perry, referring to the advent of Spanish explorers who first came to Texas in the early 1500s. “It is fitting that we should devote space on the historic south grounds of our state capitol to commemorate the contributions of our Latino brothers and sisters throughout the ages.”

More than one-third of the state’s population is Mexican American, according to U.S. census estimates.

Perry’s comments came during a bill signing ceremony he hosted at the governor’s reception room in the Capitol, which was attended by numerous elected legislative leaders and other citizens, including key guests from the Valley.

The monument will not single out specific Tejano heroes and pioneers, but instead commemorate the 500-year role of Tejanos in Texas and the Spanish-Mexican legacy in the state from 1500 to 1800, Perry explained.

The bronze monument will consist of 11 life-size sculptures, he added.

Perry noted that it was Flores who passed legislation in 2001 that authorized the Texas Preservation Board, a state government entity, to participate in the development, design, construction, and location of the Tejano Monument, portrayed by its supporters as a “legacy sculpture”.

Sen. Mario Gallegos, D-Houston, guided Flores’ bill through the Senate at the beginning of this decade.

“No army is powerful enough to defeat an idea whose time has come,” Flores said of the eight-year campaign to develop and finance the monument, then place the planned sculpture “in its rightful location.”

Flores praised the many Texans, from all walks of life, who battled for the creation, funding, and location of the Tejano Monument, especially Cayetano Barrera, M.D., and Richard Sánchez, both of McAllen, who put the evolving plan into action almost 10 years ago.

It was Barrera who brought the vision of a Tejano Monument to Sánchez, who at the time was serving as Flores’ legislative chief-of-staff.

“These two distinguished gentlemen have been joined over the years by many other dedicated people, from all cultures, in making and preserving history with this effort,” said Flores, a U.S. Army veteran. “This is truly a part of their legacies to Texas. I salute everyone involved in this noble endeavor.”

The May 29 ceremony revolved around House Bill 4114, by Rep. Trey Martínez Fischer, D-San Antonio, and Sen. Judith Zaffirini, D-Laredo. That measure directs the State Preservation Board to place the Tejano Monument on the Capitol’s south grounds.

HB 4114 also issues a moratorium on new monuments being placed on the south grounds.

The crusade to locate the Tejano Monument on hallowed land is right and just, Flores said.

“They have given equal justice in representing all of those participants who have made Texas what it is today,” Flores told the Rio Grande Guardian, an online legislative newspaper which comprehensively covers Texas border politics. “And with the significance of this monument being built there, it puts out the real story. When people come to visit the Capitol they will know that Tejanos played a big part in the creation of Texas and what it looks like today.”

Additional information on the planned Tejano Monument, along with a video link to the bill signing ceremony, is available online at www.Tejanos.com

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Tejano Monument is a richly-deserved recognition

By GOV. RICK PERRY

Good morning, buenos dias, and thank you all for being here today.

It is a pleasure to stand with such a distinguished group of Texas leaders to celebrate the essential role Tejanos have played throughout our state's history.

This day has been a long time coming. It has been nearly 500 years since Alonso Álvarez de Piñeda first explored the Texas coastline, just over 300 years since the first Spanish mission was established near El Paso, and eight years since our Legislature approved this project.

Since Representative [Kino] Flores and Senator [Mario] Gallegos carried the bill to passage in 2001, the Tejano Monument Foundation has been working hard to raise funds and clear the way for this richly-deserved recognition.

It is fitting that we should devote space on the historic south grounds of our state capitol to commemorate the contribution of our Latino brothers and sisters throughout the ages.

I'm talking about contributors ranging from José Antonio Navarro, a signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence, to Hope Andrade, our first Latina Secretary of State.

Although I credit our state's relative economic strength to the conservative fiscal policies we have defended over the years, I believe that the main source of our strength is the unmatched work ethic of our people.

Be they Anglo, Tejano or any of the other diverse cultures that call Texas home, our state is strong, dynamic and continually moving forward because of our people.

Standing here today, surrounded by supporters of this bill, leaders in our state and proud members of the Latino community, I want to congratulate you for your persistence.

I also want to commend Armando Hinojosa for your remarkable effort on this impressive work of art.

You have not only captured the essence of our state's Hispanic history, but also the independent spirit of our entire state.

In my mind, they are the same thing.

This beautiful collection of sculptures will make the historic grounds of our capitol even more beautiful, and tell an important part of our state's history for years to come.

Dr. [Cayetano] Barrera, I want to thank you for starting this process and guiding it to this next step. You should be proud.

I look forward to joining you at the dedication.