

# Tejano tribute well deserved at capitol

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We were pleased to read and hear that recognition is coming for Hispanics' historical and cultural contributions to Texas. This recognition is coming in the form of a bronze statue that will be erected in front of the state capitol.

Gov. Rick Perry signed a bill last Friday that allows the installment of the statue. We applaud the governor for his support of this important tribute.

"I'm up there on cloud nine," said Benny Martinez of Goliad, who is a member of the Tejano Monument committee. "We've been working on this for nine years."

Martinez emphasized that the monument represents the history of Texas during the past 500 years.

"The history belongs to all of us, not just Hispanics," he said.

He pointed out that it was the vaqueros — the Hispanic cowboys — who brought the cattle, horses, culture and civilization to Texas.

He said many of the vaqueros died taking care of and defending the settlers.

Hispanics built the missions. Juan Abamillo, Juan A. Badillo, Carlos Espalier, Gregorio Esparza, Antonio Fuentes and Andres Nava helped to defend the Alamo — one of those missions — during the battle for Texas Independence.

"More Mexican-Americans were awarded medals of honor for service in World War II than any other ethnic group," Martinez said.

But getting permission to place the statue in front of the capitol wasn't easy. A state environmental committee insisted that the statue be erected in back of the capitol (on its north side).

"We had to fight them to get it in front," Martinez said.

Now, after a hard-fought battle, House Bill 4114 allows the statue to be in front of the capitol (on the south side).

The bronze statue is about 30 to 40 feet wide and about 15 feet in height, and it may be the biggest monument on capitol grounds. The focus of the monument is a vaquero riding a mustang, a smaller wild horse that vaqueros broke and used in managing cattle.

Martinez said the statue, sculpted by Armando Hinojosa of Laredo, is already made and will be moved to the capitol as soon as possible. He said maybe he and a bunch of vaqueros might ride to Austin for the installation ceremony.

We share in the celebratory nature of this tribute to Hispanics and all others. And we congratulate all who made this possible.