



**Texas 1836 Project Advisory Committee  
December 2022**

PART ONE  
THE TEXAS 1836 PROJECT  
INTRODUCTION, PURPOSE, AND THE LAW

**INTRODUCTION**

The 1836 Project was conceived and implemented at an important point in the history of Texas. A fresh examination of the Lone Star State is useful as we craft a philosophical and practical inventory of what it is that makes Texas . . . Texas.

Texas is growing. Its population is more than 30 million and may double again in the next three decades. Houston is the fourth largest city in the nation, San Antonio is seventh, Dallas is ninth, Austin is eleventh, and Fort Worth is thirteenth. Once small towns like New Braunfels, Leander, and Frisco are now among the fastest growing in the country. Over the last two decades, Texas has led the nation in exports while producing nearly a tenth of the nation's total economy. In fact, Texas is the ninth largest economy on earth. It remains a preferred place to start a business, own a business, or move a business and is attractive to investors. It also leads the country in agriculture, aerospace, energy, financial services, high tech, and tourism. People are interested in coming to Texas, and four out of five that do will stay here for a lifetime. Texas will continue to diversify its economy as current and emerging technologies create new opportunities and Texas provides the place that favors those that strive. Something is happening here.

This superheated growth brings with it several challenges and opportunities. Shepherding natural resources, especially water, will become critical in this thirsty state. It will

soon become the most populous state in the US and as such will continue to have a huge impact on American politics, a power that must be wielded with prudence and wisdom. Demographics are of interest as well. Some eighty percent of Texans today are either White or Hispanic—in about equal numbers—while African Americans constitute another twelve per cent. Nearly six per cent are from Asia. The third most spoken language in the Lone Star State is Vietnamese; the fourth is Mandarin; and the fifth is Tagalog.

Can all of these diverse voices find their place in this great story? That is the challenge. What do all these Texans have in common? As it turns out, quite a lot.

Texas has not always been easy to love. Historically it was always a difficult land to settle and its people a little hard to understand. Its skies are often stingy with their rains, but sometimes send it too often, and too fast. Its climate is often too cold in the winter in some corners and too hot in the summer, and the state has proven a challenge to successful human habitation. Owing to its vastness and natural diversity it has also proven difficult to describe. For the first few millennia of human habitation, the brutal reality of the Texas landscape kept people with other choices from ever wanting to live here.

This may be the beginning of the Texas—of our—identity. We are Texan by virtue of the struggle to inhabit this place, to earn it. The United States is full of beautiful places, and Texas has its share. America is also full of easy and bountiful places, and Texas may have less than its share. It is this reality that shapes the Texas origin story. Toughing it out here influenced people. As American poet Carl Sandburg put it, “Texas is a blend of valor and swagger.”

When the first European colonizers came calling, they also found the place difficult to love and made occupying this gigantic domain a low priority in their imperial ambitions. There were few natural resources to harvest and too few people to exploit to make the place very

interesting. Even under Mexican and American control, well into the Nineteenth Century, Texas remained rural and poor—a backwater to more exciting and dynamic places.

Then, something changed. Why is our Texas . . . Texas? Why is it the way it is—why are we the way we are? What is it about this place that, despite its unpromising beginnings, has attracted so much attention over time and has given rise to larger-than-life legends and lore that continue to color this state’s identity? What is this *idea* that makes it all seem to come together?

There was a process that created Texas. The land surely played a part, but geography and climate merely created the backdrop. The people that came here or were born here have made Texas. What seemed like an inhospitable zone to many has proven a land of promise to folks with fortitude and nerve and has created a long history of rewarding risk takers. The 1836 Project is a proud part of this ongoing process.

## **PURPOSE**

This report is to fulfill the requirements of the law as already discussed. However, there is much to be added in the journey to satisfy these demands. There are also several tasks that remain to be done in the future. Clearly, the effort of the 1836 Project will not end with the delivery of this report. Rather, this mandated report will shape the discussions that flow out of this process, and establish a *lingua franca* as scholars, lawmakers, thinkers, and all Texans everywhere ruminates on what we have accomplished to date and the work that remains undone.

This report is intended to provide Texans with a glimpse of the educational, historical, and cultural contours of the state. It is designed to provide insights that might inform public policy debates. While based on sound research, professional experience, and careful methodology, it is, like most such endeavors, a mere snapshot of very dynamic processes. This is

a good faith effort, but never intended to be the only, or final word, on this topic. Rather, the 1836 Project is the beginning of open and honest conversations about how we Texans see ourselves, how we came to these views, and how we can build upon this shared identity in the future.

## **THE LAW**

House Bill 2497 (H.B. 2497), passed by the 87<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature, established the 1836 Project as an advisory committee to promote patriotic education and increase awareness of the Texas values that continue to stimulate boundless prosperity across this state. On September 1, 2021, the law became Chapter 451 of Subtitle D, Title 4 of the Government Code. The requirement of the law includes the following:

Section 451.001 of the Government Code establishes definitions. The “1836 Project” is synonymous with the advisory committee established by Section 451.002 of this legislation. Its nine members reflect the diversity of the state and include:

- Dr. Kevin Roberts — Chair
- Senator Brandon Creighton — Vice Chair
- Dr. Carolina Castillo Crimm
- Robert Edison
- Dr. Don Frazier
- Commissioner Jerry Patterson
- Sherry Sylvester
- Richard “Dick” Trabulsi, Jr.
- Walter “Mac” Woodward, Jr.

Section 451.001 also defines “Patriotic Education” as including:

- (A) presentation of the history of the state’s founding and its foundational principles;
- (B) examination of how this state has grown closer to those principles throughout its history; and
- (C) explanation of why commitment to those principles is beneficial and justified.

Section 451.003 addresses the purposes of this legislation by defining the duties of the 1836 advisory committee. “The 1836 Project [...] shall promote awareness among residents of this state of the following as they relate to the history of prosperity and democratic freedom in this state,” the law reads. This is to be accomplished by promoting awareness of the following:

- (1)(A) Texas history, including the indigenous peoples of this state, the Spanish and Mexican heritage of this state, Tejanos, the African-American heritage of this state, the Texas War for Independence, Juneteenth, annexation of Texas by the United States, the Christian heritage of this state, and this state’s heritage of keeping and bearing firearms in defense of life and liberty and for use in hunting;
- (1)(B) the founding documents of this state
- (1)(C) the founders of this state
- (1)(D) state civics;
- (1)(E) the role of this state (and Texans) in passing and reauthorizing the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 (52 U.S.C. Section 10101 et seq.), highlighting President Lyndon B. Johnson’s signing of the act, President George W. Bush’s 25-year extension of the act; and Congresswoman Barbara Jordan’s successful efforts to broaden the act to include Spanish-speaking communities.

In addition, according to Section 451.003, the 1836 Project is to:

- (2) advise the governor on the core principles of the founding of this state and how those principles further enrich the lives of its residents;
- (3) facilitate the development and implementation of the Gubernatorial 1836 Award to recognize student knowledge of Texas Independence and other items listed in (1)(A)-(D) above;
- (4) advise state agencies with regard to their efforts to ensure patriotic education is provided to the public at state parks, battlefields, monuments, museums, installations, landmarks, cemeteries, and other places important to the Texas War for Independence and founding of this state, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law;
- (5) facilitate, advise on, and promote other activities to support public knowledge of and patriotic education on the Texas War for Independence and founding of this state, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law.

A signature feature of the law is found in Section 451.005. “The 1836 Project shall provide a pamphlet to the Texas Department of Public Safety that explains the significance of policy decisions made by this state that promote liberty and freedom for businesses and families. The contents must include:

- (1) an overview of Texas history and civics;
- (2) the legacy of economic prosperity in this state; and
- (3) the abundant opportunities for businesses and families in this state.

This section of the law amends Subchapter A, Chapter 521 of the Transportation Code by adding Section 521.013 to require that the Department of Public Safety provide the pamphlet described by Section 451.005, Government Code, to persons who receive a driver's license:

- (1) after applying under Section 521.144; or
- (2) with an expiration provided by Section 521.271(a-2) or (a-3).

Section 521.013 further requires the department to make the pamphlet described by Section 451.005, Government Code, available to the public on the department's internet website.

Section 451.006 calls for a report by the 1836 Project to be prepared, produced, and delivered that provides the following:

- (1) a description of the activities of the project;
- (2) the findings and recommendations of the project;
- (3) a plan that identifies the best method of carrying out the duties under Sections 451.003(a)(1), (4), and (5);
- (4) any proposals for legislation; and
- (5) any other matter the project considers appropriate.



## PART TWO

### THE INVITED TESTIMONY

“We are all just doing our best. What more can we ask?”

Richard Johnson, Texas Public Policy Foundation

“In carrying out its duties the 1836 Project may solicit statements and contributions from intellectual and cultural figures.”

H.B. 2497, Section 451.003 (5)

One of the more rewarding features of The 1836 Project has been to hear from some of the shapers of the *public* perception of the state. While the processes of the academic and education sector was discussed in the preceding section, the Texans who came and provided testimony in person represent a broad sampling of what is often referred to as “Public History.” They are educators as well with classrooms that touch every facet of Texas life.

On March 2, 2022, at the Alamo, 1836 Project members heard from several important stewards of the Texas identity. Kate Rogers, the Executive Director, Alamo Trust, Inc. presented the plans for interpreting and preserving what has become the symbol of the Texas creation story. In the future, visitors will discover a vibrant and revitalized complex that tells the complicated story of not only the Battle of the Alamo but also the story of the indigenous, Spanish, and Mexican peoples who walked those same acres. What will emerge is a dynamic and inclusive museum and attraction setting that will be both sympathetic to the greater story of San Antonio, but also serve as a hub for the study of the Texas Revolution and the founding era of Texas.

Shalon Bond, President, Texas Council for Social Studies also spoke to the 1836 Project. In her remarks, she made an appeal for the importance in renewing excellent social studies teaching in the state and was particularly interested in working with this effort to make sure that the story of Texas is available to every student in the state. She also made clear that the delivery of this excellent content needed to make great use of current and emerging technologies. The story of Texas makes a great book, but it also needs to be on computers, tablets, and mobile phones. Teachers, desperate for content, would look to the 1836 Project to begin the important conversations about the past, present, and future of Texas.

Monica Martinez, the Associate Commissioner of Standards and Support Services, Texas Education Agency provided keen insights into the mechanisms by which Texas curriculum is crafted. What do we want the children of Texas to know? Who decides? Martinez made a compelling case that the process in Texas is remarkably accessible and democratic in its approach but can often be messy and contentious as a result. Everyone gets a say, and often everyone take advantage of that right!

Next, Dr. Lloyd Potter, the Texas State Demographer, spoke of emerging trends among the people of Texas. As has always been the case, people are moving to Texas. This includes profound internal migration from within the United States with people from California, Illinois and New York leading the way. There are also important contributions to the population from traditional sources like Mexico and greater Latin America, but also from new origins including South Asia and West Africa. All these new Texans--whether from San Francisco, Lagos, or Mumbai—need to know the great story they are reading and are becoming part of, and how to find their place in the telling.

The final person to testify was Mark Wolfe, the Executive Director, Texas Historical Commission. The official state historic preservation office has undergone a major change in the last few years, having morphed from a regulatory agency to an active participant in the telling of the Texas story at historic sites across the state. What had once been a state bureaucracy that were keepers of the statutes and regulations regarding historic places, and now includes into managing properties for the public good. In addition, The Texas Historical Commission pursues a dynamic educational role, serving to support and train the keepers of Texas historic places across the state. They are the state's face of historic stewardship.

This meeting was a memorable marking of Texas Independence Day. San Jacinto Day was also momentous.

On April 21, 2022, the 1836 Project met in the state capitol to hear the testimony of some of Austin's key practitioners of public history. Rod Welch, Executive Director, Texas State Preservation Board discussed the various roles played by his agency. Established in 1983 by the Texas 68th Legislature, the State Preservation Board preserves, maintains and restores the State Capitol, the General Land Office Building, and their contents and grounds for the benefit of the citizens of Texas. Also included in its portfolio are the Texas State Cemetery, the Governor's Mansion, the Capitol Visitors Center, and the Capitol Grounds. This is the organization that maintains many of the public symbols and edifices that define Texas and serve the role of landlord to these important places.

Maintaining the capitol is an important function, and the 1836 Project next heard from Ali James, Curator of the Capitol and the supervisor of Visitor Services and Tour Guides for the Capitol, as well as the Capitol Visitor's Center, the Governor's Mansion, and the Texas State

Cemetery. While the State Preservation Board is the property manager, James and her crew are the ones that breathe life and energy into these important places.

Meanwhile, Margaret Koch, Director, Bullock State History Museum related the awesome responsibility that comes with being the facility charged with telling the Texas story in an interactive and tactile way. Museum work is challenging but having a charge as large as Texas makes for even greater trials. Even so, under her leadership “The Bullock” serves an important role as the gateway experience to visitors as they encounter the story of Texas through its objects, exhibits, and programs.

The Honorable Ken Wise, 2nd Vice President, Texas State Historical Association rounded out the April 21 testimony. Established in 1897 to “foster the appreciation, understanding, and teaching of the rich and unique history of Texas and, by example and through programs and activities, encourage and promote research, preservation, and publication of historical material affecting the State of Texas,” the Texas State Historical Association has become a venerated institution in the state. This status does not come without its controversies. It has, through its close control of such publications as *The Handbook of Texas* and the *Texas Almanac*, and the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* become the de facto gatekeeper of what gets *told* in the Texas story.

On August 29, 2022, the 1836 Project heard the last of its invited testimony. Michelle Haas of Corpus Christi, representing the Texas History Trust, explained the need for wide access to the primary sources that constitute the bedrock of understanding Texas history. A well-known critic of the Texas State Historical Association and many academic historians in the state, Haas has taken on a project to make freely available important sources that includes the voices of Texans who founded, and crafted, this state. She sees this as an antidote to the gatekeeping she

senses coming from institutions of higher education and forces she believes are engaged in manipulating the Texas story to serve political agendas rather than historical accuracy.

Jody Ginn and Audry Ladd spoke on behalf of the Texas Rangers Museum and Hall of Fame in Waco. Founded in 1823, the Rangers remain a vital part of the Texas identity, and like the state they serve, they sometimes did not get it right. This institution is expanding its physical and public presence in conjunction with the Texas Rangers Bicentennial. Lately, the reputation of the Texas Rangers has been under renewed scrutiny, with dark episodes in the antebellum period and early twentieth century revealing deeds of extra-legal violence and accusations of state sponsored oppression. While recognizing that the Texas Rangers have their flaws which include a mixed record on human rights, Ginn and Ladd assured the panel that the full story of the Texas Rangers will be on display in the new programming.

Gloria Meraz, Director, Texas State Library and Archives Commission discussed the role of her organization in preserving the official documents of the State of Texas. While this function is well known, there are other parts of the collection that include physical artifacts such as flags captured during the Texas Revolution and banners once held aloft over Confederate regiments. One of the major conundrums of our day—in regard to historical stewardship of our collective story—is what is the appropriate treatment and conservation of parts of the state’s history that some may find offensive. This, of course, if not limited to the artifacts from historical events like these flags but extends even to how the past is memorialized in public spaces.

The final presenter to the 1836 Project was Robert Johnson, an advisor to the Texas Public Policy Foundation. While acknowledging that the story of Texas is complicated, that an honest approach to the past that extracts a positive and optimistic telling of our story is critical to

create what sociologists would refer to as social capital. “We are all just doing our best,” he told the committee, “to make Texas a better place.” He went on to mention that African American Texans including William Goyen and Heman Swett are part of a rich legacy that has influenced all American history.

The testimony of these invited speakers presented a useful cross section of the work—and the mood—in talking about the Texas past as it continues to play out in 2022. From state employees to heads of non-profits, and even private citizens who feel strongly on the topic, these Lone Star citizens shared their experiences from their various vantage points and helped shape a more informed and nuanced view of how we discuss the Texas identity. The committee appreciates the participation of everyone who provided testimony.

## PART THREE

### THE STORY OF TEXAS

(The Text of the 1836 Project Pamphlet)

“You don’t just move into Texas, it moves into you.”

Manny Fernandez, *New York Times*

“The 1836 Project shall provide a pamphlet to the Texas Department of Public Safety that explains the significance of policy decisions made by this state that promote liberty and freedom for businesses and families.”

H.B. 2497, Section 451.005

Why is Texas the way it is? What is it about this place that has attracted so much attention over time and has given rise to larger-than-life legends and lore that continue to color this state’s identity? The land surely played a part, but geography and climate merely created the backdrop. The people that were born here or came here have made Texas. What seemed like an inhospitable zone to many has proved to be a land of promise to those with fortitude and nerve. This is their story—and yours.

The original inhabitants of Texas, small bands of hunter gatherers, drifted across the land on foot for the first 14,000 years, migrating with the seasons from seashore to pecan-

covered river bottoms or inland cactus groves. Armed with a knowledge of astronomy, water sources and food supplies, they acclimated to an environment which could be harsh and unforgiving, but which also provided a moderate climate during much of the year. In addition to the small wandering tribes, by the 1500s a variety of tribes known collectively as the Caddo had created farming communities and carried on extensive trade with peoples as distant as New Mexico and the Great Lakes.

In the 1520s, a small group of shipwrecked Spanish castaways made their way across Texas led by Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca—credited as the first European explorer in the region. After many trials, the survivors made it back to Mexico with the help of the many small tribes who peopled the land. It is believed that one of the Caddo tribes may have introduced themselves to the Spanish using the word “Teysha” meaning friend or allies. The Spaniards, however, reported little of interest among their “Teysha” friends. There were no European style civilizations, but more importantly, there was neither gold nor silver to fill the coffers of Spain. Subsequent expeditions confirmed these findings and Spain lost interest. For 200 more years, Texas remained the domain of the native peoples.

By 1690, global jealousies among the European powers changed the Spanish attitude about their far-flung northern American frontier. In response to French incursions into Louisiana, Spain had to take a chance on this far northern *despoblado*, or wilderness. To establish control over the natives of these lands, which the Spanish called the great kingdom of the “Tejas,” the least expensive method was religious conversion. Franciscan missionaries marched north to take up missionary work among the Caddo, attempting to convert them into proper Christian Spaniards while others toiled among the natives along the coast. Far to the east, Los Adaes, the first capital of Tejas, anchored these efforts and served as a block to



French ambitions. When smallpox killed their children, the Caddo refused the advances of the missionaries, using the Spanish outposts merely as stopping points on their annual migrations.

The wilderness rivalry continued for several years. Spanish and French interest in native trade and control enabled the Caddo to play the Europeans off against one another as the natives negotiated to secure their highly prized weapons and trade goods. The Spanish, having made little progress in converting the Caddo, withdrew their scattered missions back to the San Antonio River valley while maintaining Nacogdoches as a defense against French incursions and contraband trade. Spain also sent reinforcements to Tejas. In 1740, José de Escandón established half-a-dozen Spanish settlements along the Rio Bravo (Rio Grande del Norte) in a great land rush and a few years later built Presidio La Bahia to guard the coast. By mid-century, Spanish Tejas could boast a population of 5,000 hardy settlers.

The Spanish settlers who moved into the new land to join the missionaries learned to be tough, self-reliant, and independent. A spirit of *patria chica*, or local loyalty, developed among the settlements. Following the dictates of laws from faraway Mexico and even farther away Madrid, the people of the province referred to each other as *vecinos*, neighbors, as they created a network of *compadrazgo* or godparenthood which provided support, friendship, and protection.

The indigenous tribes may not all have adopted Spanish religion, but they did adopt Spanish horse culture. The Comanche, mounted on stolen or captured Spanish horses, transformed themselves into a mighty empire. By the 1770s, from their home base in what is now north Texas, Oklahoma, and Colorado they swept south into Tejas and deeper into Mexico to raid Spanish ranches and feed a booming trade in horses. Spanish mounted units—*presidiales*—struggled to defend the region against these nimble adversaries.

Everything changed in 1810. Triggered by Napoleon's invasion of Spain, Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla led Mexico's first attempt at independence from Spain. San Antonio became a battleground as the small-town split between those favoring the Royalist cause and those seeking independence from Spain. Texas' first republic and first Constitution, written by Bernardo Gutierrez de Lara, failed in 1813 when Royalist forces including a young lieutenant named Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna arrived from central Mexico. At the Battle of Medina, General José Joaquín de Arredondo defeated an insurgent army and then massacred more than 1,400 settlers opposed to the royal government.

In 1821, after a lengthy eleven-year struggle for independence, Mexico at last emerged as a new nation but its economy was in shambles. Threatened by the Spanish, French, Americans and the ever-present Comanches, Mexican leaders needed to people their northern border. They took a chance and invited American immigrants into the undeveloped, and now nearly depopulated, Tejas.

Where three hundred years of indigenous, Spanish and Mexican control had seen Tejas as full of difficulties and vexations, incoming Americans saw a land of boundless opportunity. The government of Mexico used a system of contractors—much like modern day real estate developers—to grant land to incoming settlers. People like Stephen F. Austin, Martín de León and Green DeWitt agreed to help the government settle people in the region in exchange for grants of large tracts of land. The Americans, attracted by the immense offers of more than 4,000 acres of land for each family, looked to commerce, ranching, farming and plantation agriculture to create a profitable economy.

The presence of enslaved people among these Americans proved a dilemma for Mexico. In 1829, the Mexican government passed a law prohibiting slavery—but exempted

Tejas. Many opposed the institution on moral and philosophical grounds, but these immigrants and some officials saw it as necessary to develop the region's agricultural potential. These differences of opinion would be a constant cause of friction.

Local Tejanos had mixed feelings about the newcomers. While welcoming the energy, enthusiasm, and economics of the newcomers, the Spanish-speaking inhabitants of Tejas discovered their small population of some 2,500 people had been swamped by more than 30,000 American immigrants including 5,000 enslaved laborers and the attending evil of the institution. These new settlers, some of whom had come into Coahuila y Tejas illegally, rarely abided by their contractual obligations. They seldom spoke the Spanish language, only occasionally practiced the official Catholic religion, and asked for their own judicial and educational systems. They even changed the similar sounding "j" to an "x" creating Texas when discussing the province. These Americans also believed in certain "inalienable rights" and were quick to defend them.

The Mexican hope and settlers' dream of prosperity for Texas would take a lot of work and the burden of accomplishing it would fall unevenly. By 1823 a local militia, the Texas Rangers, emerged to maintain armed vigilance and protection over the project. Even so, Texas soon had a reputation. "Texas is heaven for men and dogs," the saying went, "but hell for women and oxen." This was doubly true for the enslaved, enduring the same hardship but under more cruel circumstances.

A revolt by Haden Edwards and his colonists at Nacogdoches in 1826 caused Mexican officials to reconsider the experiment. The government sent an expedition to Texas under General Manuel de Mier y Terán to determine the level of loyalty of the new settlers. In his 1828 report, the General observed, "Among these foreigners are fugitives from justice, honest

laborers, vagabonds and criminals.” These Americans may have become Mexicans by law, but intellectually they remained attached to the ideals of the American Revolution.

“Honorable and dishonorable alike travel with their political constitution in their pockets,” Mier y Terán wrote, “demanding the privileges, authority and officers which such a constitution guarantees.”

Mexico also fractured politically. One faction supported the Conservative Centralist position with power controlled from Mexico City while another was in favor of a Federalist states’ rights constitution with power in the hands of local citizens. Most of the newly arrived settlers favored the 1824 Federalist constitution. In 1830, a Centralist Mexican regime attempted to resolve the American immigration problem by closing the borders. Just two years later, under a resurgent Federalist government, the border reopened, and American immigrants once again flooded into Texas.

By 1834, the Federalists found themselves again displaced by the Centralists, who had created a new constitution under the leadership of General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. Eight Mexican states revolted against their loss of local control. Santa Anna moved quickly and harshly to crush the rebellions. In December of 1835, Federalists in San Antonio defeated and expelled the Centralist garrison. Santa Anna turned his focus to Texas to stamp out the rebellion there and punish the so-called “Texians.”

Surprised by the Centralist army’s advance, some 200 insurgents led by William B. Travis, James Bowie and David Crockett made a stand at the small mission known as the Alamo in San Antonio. After a thirteen days siege, Santa Anna defeated the defenders and wiped out the small garrison. Meanwhile, at Goliad, Centralist troops captured a sizable Texian army under Colonel James Walker Fannin and executed most of the prisoners. This American-

dominated region quickly shifted from a lukewarm loyalty to Mexico to a fervent enthusiasm for independence.

The Texians avowed their purpose. “The Mexican government, by its colonization laws, invited and induced the Anglo-American population of Texas to continue to enjoy that constitutional liberty and republican government to which they had been habituated in the land of their birth, the United States of America. In this expectation they have been cruelly disappointed.”

The men who declared Texas independent and fought to achieve that independence included newcomers and native-born alike. On average, these men were about forty-years old, with the youngest in his early twenties, and the oldest in his seventies. Most were men entering middle age, most of them with families and obligations. By and large they were born in the South, but a handful came from Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts. Others hailed from places like Ireland, England, Canada, and Central and Eastern European countries. A few held enslaved people as property, but the overwhelming majority did not. Many were farmers, but there were as many merchants, land speculators, lawyers, and doctors as there were sodbusters. A few seemed to fit Mier y Terán’s description of *unruly*, but mostly they liked rules, they just didn’t like it when people changed them without their consent.

Many of these revolutionaries were natives of Mexico, and like their compatriots born elsewhere, opposed tyranny. Francisco Ruiz, Juan Seguin, and Jose Antonio Navarro were from San Antonio de Béxar, now a battlefield in this struggle for independence. Lorenzo de Zavala, a native of the Yucatan, agreed. These men understood that the promises of liberty transcended national borders and nativity.

On March 2, 1836, this collection of risk takers announced the creation of a new nation: The Republic of Texas. The question that hung in the air that day was what kind of country would it be? In 1776, the men who declared American independence in Philadelphia two generations before had the *idea* of what their nation might be. In 1810, Father Hidalgo had issued his *Grito de Dolores* in favor of Mexican independence and pronounced “death to bad government.” On March 2, 1836, the signers at Washington on the Brazos and heirs to these traditions knew exactly what they wanted. Here, in the lands stretching from the Red River to the Rio Grande, and from the Sabine to the great unknown to the west, these ideals would be tested in the field. On April 21, 1836, General Sam Houston led these bold Texans and Tejanos to victory on the battlefield of San Jacinto.

The emerging Republic of Texas had plenty of problems as it attempted to live up to these promises. Deeply indebted to American creditors, the country claimed a wide swath of territory from the mouth of the Rio Grande to present day Wyoming. There were too few people facing too many problems. Texans hoped the United States would soon annex their republic before the new country collapsed. Mexico, meanwhile, refused to recognize the legitimacy of the upstart nation and threatened war with the U.S. should they occupy Texas.

Annexation would not come as easily as the Texans hoped. The Republic had patterned its constitution after those of North Carolina and Tennessee where slavery was legal. This complicated the issue for the American government which could not admit Texas without upsetting the fragile balance existing between slave and free states. As a result, the new Republic of Texas struggled for nearly a decade while presidents Sam Houston, Mirabeau B. Lamar and Anson Jones navigated Indian affairs, invasions by Mexican forces, and a ballooning national debt. Even so, Texas persisted. “Texas has yet to learn submission to any

oppression,” Houston declared, “come from what source it may.”

Their stubbornness paid off. Skillful political maneuvering and diplomacy in Washington D. C. and Texas finally led to annexation in 1845. This, as Mexico had promised, led to a war between the United States and the Republic of Mexico. The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, ending the conflict, forced Mexico to give up one third of its territory, including Texas, in exchange for \$18 million dollars, an amount worth about \$600 million today. As the United States struggled with the question of whether the newly acquired territory would be slave or free, the Compromise of 1850 resulted in Texas losing its western third (what is now New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming) to pay off the debt the new state brought with it.

At last, solvent and safe as part of the United States, Texas grew rapidly. Southerners, moved in, as did Germans, Poles, Czechs, and other Europeans. Their arrival, however, came at the disadvantage of the indigenous peoples and further marginalized the Tejanos in and around San Antonio and South Texas. In this process, what had been a diverse borderland became an extension of the American South. Enslaved individuals accounted for a third of Texas’s 600,000 inhabitants by 1860 and a great deal of its productivity.

When the southern states seceded from the United States and formed the Confederate States of America in 1861, Texas joined them over the objections of legendary leaders like Houston and James W. Throckmorton. Many, including Tejanos and Germans, opposed slavery and the Confederacy, and often served in Union regiments. Tens of thousands of Texans, including Tejanos and Germans, fought for the South. Some served as enthusiastic volunteers, while others joined after conscription became law and denied them the option of staying at home. Texans fought on nearly every Civil War battlefield, but especially in

Louisiana. One in five Texas Confederates died in the conflict. The last battle of the Civil War—little more than a heated skirmish—was fought in Texas at Palmito Ranch a month after the surrender at Appomattox. On June 19, 1865, U. S. officials in Galveston declared the end of the war and announced the freeing of all slaves. It is a date which is still celebrated among African Americans as Juneteenth, now a national holiday.

Through it all, the state emerged defeated but relatively untouched as no major battles occurred here. Soon U.S. occupation forces moved into Texas to bring it back into the United States. Some of the newcomers wondered why they bothered. One disappointed commander remarked, “If I owned Hell and Texas, I would live in Hell and rent out Texas.”

In many ways, the American Civil War, and the decades after, helped craft modern Texas. Reconstruction introduced Texans to a constitution in which the government in Austin was dominated by a pro-Union governor and his cabinet and with multiple laws opposed by many of the ex-Confederates. It also gave rights to a newly freed African American population who, with the help of the northern Freedmen’s Bureau, took advantage of their chance at education and self- government.

With the end of Reconstruction in 1876, when given an opportunity to overhaul its state constitution, pro-Southern white Texans responded by creating a weakened state government while defending the concept of federalism as expressed in the Tenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Following reconstruction African Americans lost many of their rights. The Comanche Empire also collapsed, and its people moved to a reservation. Commercial hunters killed off the American bison that covered the Texas plains nearly to extinction although some in the state lobbied to have the buffalo protected by law. Bold stock raisers turned long-distance cattle drives into a lucrative ranching industry. Railroads soon spread a steel web across the



state, and even the great expanse of West Texas started to fill with homesteaders as railroads sold alternating sections of land to farmers. By the end of the century, more than 3 million people called Texas home.

Texas was prosperous but was not economically different from the rest of the South. It was an agrarian state like Alabama or Mississippi. Jim Crow laws discriminating against African Americans, and legal segregation and ethnic bias against minority groups continued into the new century. Like elsewhere in the United States, there was some population diversity with significant areas of German, Czech, Polish, Italian, and other European settlement. The Tejano population remained relatively small and concentrated mostly in San Antonio and the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Yet, Texas was huge and remained full of promise. Promoters had always touted its great potential as a farm and ranch paradise. The idea that everything was bigger in the Lone Star State began to take root. The state government also fostered a probusiness environment. The image of the bold and daring Texan spread across the globe.

In 1901, Texas changed. The discovery of oil, especially at Spindletop near Beaumont, ushered in a period of remarkable transformation. Farm laborers and cowboys who had struggled as cotton sharecroppers and ranch hands became roughnecks and roustabouts in the ever-spreading oil fields of the state. The state government protected the new industry with laws that favored independent operators over large national corporations. Houston blossomed as the energy capital of the world, while Dallas became a financial center where deals and fortunes were made. The “wildcatter” and the oil derrick became new Texas icons.

In 1910, problems in Mexico once again impacted Texas. The overthrow of President

Porfirio Diaz led to a decade-long revolution that ravaged the country and drove thousands of Mexicans across the border into the United States, especially Texas. New tensions, cross border violence and raids, summary justice, and extralegal executions often at the hands of state officials marked this dark period. The United States also sent troops to Texas to guard the troubled border, and in 1916 even launched a brief raid into Chihuahua from El Paso in search of rebel leader Pancho Villa, but with little success.

The new immigrants fueled the booming Texas economy as its population swelled. Texas politicians took center stage in Washington D.C. Men such as Edward House, Sam Rayburn and John “Cactus Jack” Garner impacted U.S. and global affairs. Events surrounding World War I brought a fresh interest in things Texan as American soldiers were stationed at newly established military bases.

In 1936, Texas made news across the country. At Fair Park in Dallas, the state threw a huge centennial birthday party marking the debut of a new and improved Texas. It reconnected with its revolutionary and republic origins, its cowboy identity, its lone star flag, and its growing energy dominance. It may have been a burst of romantic nationalism, but it did much to define the unique Texas identity and showcase the state to the nation and the world. “Texas is neither southern nor western. Texas is Texas,” wrote William A. ‘Dollar Bill’ Blakely, a successful and colorful businessman and politician. Author John Gunther of Illinois quipped in his travelogue, *Inside U.S.A.*, “If a man is from Texas, he’ll tell you. If he’s not, why embarrass him by asking?”

Texas was still far from perfect. The presence of racial oppressions such as the White Democratic Primary—which effectively barred African Americans from voting—and segregation laws remained vestiges that continued to shadow the Texas identity. Tejano

natives and Mexican newcomers alike also faced discrimination.

World War II brought more prosperity, more recognition, and more population to the state. By 1940, there were 6 million people calling Texas home. Military bases and defense industries joined oil and agriculture as major employers. Texans did their part in the second World War as well. Names like Oveta Culp Hobby, Audie Murphy, Earl Rudder, Dorie Miller, and Samuel Dealey joined the list of national heroes. Admiral Chester Nimitz of Fredericksburg was the architect of victory in the Pacific Theater.

Like the rest of the nation, Texas was changing. After the war, many service members who had enjoyed their time at Texas military bases came back to Texas and stayed. Others planned for a way to return, attracted by its wide-open spaces, and promise of opportunity. One of the veterans who immigrated to Texas was Connecticut native George Herbert Walker Bush who had flown bombing missions in the Pacific theater from the deck of the *USS San Jacinto*. He and his family were not alone in the move— by 1950 the state increased its population another million and added another 2.5 million a decade later for a total of 9.5 million Texans.

The Lone Star State also embraced the military as a permanent part of its landscape during the Cold War. Many of its communities hosted hundreds of thousands of newcomers in uniform from across the country. San Antonio, El Paso, Fort Worth, Abilene, Corpus Christi, and many smaller towns hosted bases and enjoyed the influence of new residents.

Texas still had plenty of detractors. Edna Ferber wrote *Giant*, which many considered an unflattering novel about the state. When the book became a movie starring Rock Hudson, James Dean, and Elizabeth Taylor, Texans embraced the over-the-top portrayal of the state.

John Bainbridge, in his 1961 book *The Super Americans*, described Texas as a land of wealthy, boastful, and boorish people but conceded that many were also optimistic, friendly, and pragmatic. To this day, the caricature of the outlandish, loud, and self-important Texan has become a staple of American popular culture.

Even so, Texas reached for the stars. In 1961, with the help and influence of Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) created the Johnson Space Center. One of the salient features of the Houston area that made it a good home to America's emerging space program was its well-trained work force and its institutions of higher learning. Rice University, although segregated at the time and therefore ineligible for government contracts, rose to the challenge. "Rice University stands at the crossroads," attorney Tom Martis Davis argued in a suit to integrate the school. "It can go to the moon, or it can return to the nineteenth century." The school indeed opened its doors to all students. As a result of this progressive vision, the first word spoken from the moon was "Houston."

The spirit of change transformed Texas during the 1960s. The Civil Rights Movement swept across the country and African American Texans who had shown grit and grace in the face of adversity for more than a century became active participants. Congresswoman Barbara Jordan of Houston became instrumental in using the levers of political power to help the movement along. After the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas in 1963, Texan Lyndon Baines Johnson took over the presidency and became a tireless advocate of what he christened "The Great Society." He promised equality and opportunity for all Americans passing the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and Voting Rights Act in 1965.

As the nation changed, so did its politics. The South, once solidly Democratic, shifted

toward the Republican Party over the next few decades. Texas, which had long been solidly, if conservatively, Democrat since 1846, followed the defection toward the Republicans. The 1970s saw this shift gather momentum. By 1990, Texan George H. W. Bush, a Republican, was president of the United States. Four years later, his son, George W. Bush, was governor of Texas and he too became president of the United States in 2000.

Texas continues to grow. Its population is more than 30 million and it is expected to almost double by 2050. Houston, the fourth largest city in the nation, San Antonio, the seventh, Dallas, the ninth and Austin, the eleventh, are innovation hubs for the entire country and home to 54 Fortune 500 headquarters. Thanks to the Texas model – low taxes, reasonable regulation, and fair and balanced tort laws – Texas has flourished, leading the nation in exports while producing a tenth of the entire nation’s total economy. Texas currently has the ninth largest economy in the world, outpacing Russia, Canada, and Brazil.

While energy and agriculture are the largest sectors of the Texas economy, the state’s \$141.7 billion information and technology sector accounts for 8.3% of the state’s total economy. 42,000 tech companies have been established in Texas, employing 226,000 Texans. The aerospace, financial services, biomedicine, and tourism industries are also thriving in Texas, and all play a huge role in the global economy. While the Texas economy has become exceptionally diverse, the state’s oil and gas production has led to a manufacturing boom and made the United States energy independent, thereby enhancing national security.

In the coming years, Texas will be the most populous state in the nation. Hundreds of people move here every day from other states and nations drawn by the region’s beauty, diversity, low cost of living and a culture that supports re-invention and innovation. Four out of five who move to the Lone Star State will stay for a lifetime.

From its past and present, and looking forward to the future, Texas has become a mix of remembering the Alamo, watching a rodeo, dancing to conjunto, and busting a rhyme, all with a touch of tuxedo and an aria by Mozart. It is barbecue, *barbacoa*, chicken fry and *schnitzel*. Texans are a people of many places united by a shared identity. The hope is that all Texans understand what they are receiving—what they are building upon—as they write new chapters of the story. Texas has always been a borderland, inhabited by people who create exceptional lives. This tale is far from perfect, like most human endeavors. Even so, it is full of optimism, energy, grit, and gumption that sets a bold example for the rest of the nation and the world.

PART FOUR  
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Section 451.006(a) of the Government Code calls for a report to be delivered that provides the following:

- (1) a description of the activities of the project;
- (2) the findings and recommendations of the project;
- (3) a plan that identifies the best method of carrying out the duties under Sections 451.003(a)(1), (4), and (5);
- (4) any proposals for legislation; and
- (5) any other matter the project considers appropriate.

Section 451.003 of the Government Code provides that the 1836 Project shall prepare and produce a written report that promotes awareness among residents of this state of the following as they relate to the history of prosperity and democratic freedom in this state:

- Texas history, including the indigenous peoples of this state, the Spanish and Mexican heritage of this state, Tejanos, the African-American heritage of this state, the Texas War for Independence, Juneteenth, annexation of Texas by the United States, the Christian heritage of this state, and this state 's heritage of keeping and bearing firearms in defense of life and liberty and for use in hunting;
- The founding documents of this state;
- The founders of this state;
- State civics; and
- the role of this state in passing and reauthorizing the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 (52 U.S.C. Section 10101 et seq.), highlighting:

- President Lyndon B. Johnson’s signing of the act;
- President George W. Bush’s 25-year extension of the act; and
- Congresswoman Barbara Jordan’s successful efforts to broaden the act to include Spanish-speaking communities;

(2) advise the governor on the core principles of the founding of this state and how those principles further enrich the lives of its residents;

(3) facilitate the development and implementation of the Gubernatorial 1836 Award to recognize student knowledge of Texas Independence;

(4) advise state agencies with regard to their efforts to ensure patriotic education is provided to the public at state parks, battlefields, monuments, museums, installations, landmarks,

cemeteries, and other places important to the Texas War for Independence and founding of this state, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law;

(5) facilitate, advise on, and promote other activities to support public knowledge of and patriotic education on the Texas War for Independence and founding of this state, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEGISLATION

Section 451.006(a)(4) provides that the 1836 Project make proposals for legislation.

### **Legislative Recommendations:**

The Texas 1836 Project has made great strides in laying the groundwork for the celebration of the anniversary of Texas independence in 2036. We have achieved the objectives of the law that brought it into being.

- As directed, we have created a pamphlet for distribution through the Texas Department of Public Safety as part of gaining a driver's license in this state. The pamphlet provides a baseline summary of Texas history for educators, civic groups, and private citizens
- We have also created a comprehensive report that builds upon the work started with the pamphlet while expanding on themes that needed more attention. We have employed the knowledge of many Texas experts who addressed the 1836 Project and provided additional information through invited testimony.

The Texas 1836 Project has taken a deep dive into some of these questions and has produced two written artifacts of that long expedition into the psyche of the Lone Star State. We have made the first steps in defining who we are as Texans and how our state became a beacon of prosperity and the target for most American state to state in- migration for the past decade? We also have looked at how to ensure we amplify the founding principles of our state while harnessing the energy of everyone who calls themselves a Texan – including those who have been here for generations and those who have just arrived – to ensure that our state continues to be the best embodiment of the American spirit.

### **Request of the 88<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature in 2023:**

- **Appropriate Funds** specifically to pay for the design, printing, publication, and distribution of the 1836 Project Pamphlet, *Telling the Texas Story* as described in Section 451.005 of the Government Code. Section 451.004 further states that the Texas Education Agency shall provide funding and administrative support for the 1836 Project, including for the pamphlets described by Section 451.005, to the extent funds are available for those purposes. Funds need to be specifically appropriated for this purpose lest the efforts of the 1836 Project languish in a bureaucratic doldrum. Furthermore, Section 4 of H.B. 2497 states that the Texas Education Agency and the Department of Public Safety of the State of Texas are required to implement a provision of this Act only if the legislature appropriates money specifically for that purpose. If the legislature does not appropriate money specifically for that purpose, those agencies may, but are not required to, implement a provision of H.B. 2497 using other appropriations available for that purpose.
- **Create a history education collaborative** between every Texas public history organization that is currently involved in instructing public school teachers on Texas history including the Texas Historical Commission, the Texas State Archives, Texas Parks & Wildlife, the Texas Preservation Board, the Alamo, the Texas State Museum, partnerships with non-profit institutions across the state to include, but is not limited to, organizations like The Alamo Trust, The Bryan Museum, The Texas Center at Schreiner University, the African American Museum of Dallas, The Cherokee Nation of North Texas, The Sam Houston Memorial Museum and Republic of Texas Presidential Library, George Ranch Historical Park, and other entities that are appropriate to the efforts related to Section 451.003(a)(1), (4), and (5) of the Government Code.

- **Provide Input on the Revision of the TEKS** (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) to include placing the study of Texas into a national and international context and expand to a K-12 approach. This is about Texas cultural sustainability.
- **Public Monuments and Memorials** should receive the protection of law that delineate a due process with public input by which these monuments are removed, replaced, or modified. The Texas Centennial Monuments should be assigned to a state agency for care and maintenance such as the Texas Historical Commission, Texas Parks and Wildlife, the State Preservation Board or the Texas Facilities Commission.
- **Provide school districts** with resources that can only be used for cross-disciplinary field trips to Texas sites in grades K-8. Field trip opportunities have been greatly reduced in the past couple of decades. With a little creativity, activities that address all four core subjects can be worked into such trips. Celebrate history, archaeology, agriculture, music, geology, poetry, and literature about Texas. Show Texas contributions in all those subjects.
- **Social Studies Education** needs to be emphasized across the state in the same way that STEAM subjects are emphasized now.
- The legislature should authorize the Texas Education Agency to develop a instructional program for every teacher who teaches Texas history.
- **Texas and the Voting Rights Act.** From the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 to the present, President Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas led the way in making sure every voice is heard at the polling booth. We should continue this tradition by encouraging the political participation of every Texan while guarding against voter fraud.
- **March 2** should be a state holiday.

- **Appropriate funds** to facilitate the development and implementation of the Gubernatorial 1836 Award to recognize student knowledge of Texas Independence.

## CONCLUSION

The Texas 1836 Project has made great strides in achieving the objectives of the law that brought it into being. Much of the time so far has been spent crafting a pamphlet for distribution through the Texas Department of Public Safety as part of gaining a driver's license in this state. We suspect that educators, civic groups, and private citizens will also be interested in gaining access to this publication as a place to start their discussions of The Texas Story. The second great endeavor was the creation of this comprehensive report that builds upon the work started with the pamphlet while expanding on themes that needed more attention. This was greatly facilitated by the presentations made by fellow Texans through a system of public and invited testimony.

Dr. Kevin Roberts, Chair

Senator Brandon Creighton, Vice Chair

Dr. Carolina Castillo Crimm

Robert Edison

Dr. Don Frazier

Commissioner Jerry Patterson

Sherry Sylvester

Richard "Dick" Trabulsi, Jr.

Walter "Mac" Woodward, Jr.