

A New Line in the Sand. Which Side will You be on?

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During their September quarterly meeting, the State Republican Executive Committee (SREC) passed the following resolution with a vote of 57 to 1.

Resolution to Preserve and Protect the Alamo

WHEREAS the Alamo is the cradle of Texas liberty and has been the paramount symbol of our heritage for almost 200 years; and

WHEREAS there are forces at work to remake or “Reimagine” the history of the Alamo and diminish its inspiring message while the property around it undergoes renovation to increase profit from tourism;

BE IT RESOLVED that decision-making authorities shall affirm and emphasize the intrinsic significance of the 1836 battle in telling the story of the Alamo; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Republican Party of Texas respectfully asks that the Texas General Land Office voluntarily commit to transparency in finances and operations of the Alamo, including the open records requests for information from nonprofit corporations engaged in the restoration and operation of the Alamo; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Texas’ authority regarding the Alamo shall not be infringed upon by any organization or authority, including but not limited to local governments, the federal government, the United Nations, or UNESCO; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that this resolution be submitted to the Texas General Land Office and to the 2018 Republican Party of Texas convention Platform and Resolutions Committee for its consideration.

Over the past couple of years, the Alamo has been in the crosshairs of a major renovation that is expected to last several years and cost the Texas taxpayer around 400 million dollars. The renovation project has been named “Reimagine the Alamo” <https://reimaginethealamo.org/> and has been spearheaded by Land Commissioner George P. Bush, the San Antonio City Council,

and the Alamo Foundation. Financial support in the amount of \$31,000,000 in the 83rd session and \$75,000,000 in the 85th has been provided by the taxpayer through the Texas legislature. The project has grown from a little over 2 acres to over 9.

Although the Alamo became a World Heritage site under the previous land commissioner, big changes did not start occurring until the current commissioner took office in 2015.

In 2011, HB3726 by State Representative Leticia Van DePutte of San Antonio passed that would allow the Daughters to remain as custodians of the Alamo, but place the property under state oversight beginning September 1st of that same year. The DRT began overseeing the Alamo in 1905.

There was a lot of controversy surrounding this change in duties for the DRT, but one of the reasons that was given for the change is that the Alamo has some major structural issues that need to be addressed and that the Daughters would not be able to raise the funds needed to make these repairs. The custodial contract that the Daughters had with the state ended in July of 2015 after they were ordered out of that position in March of the same year by Commissioner Bush.

Governor Abbott also signed legislation that year changing the composition of the state's Alamo Advisory Board that removed the DRT's representative position and required the city of San Antonio and the GLO to work together as overseers of the Alamo.

<http://www.expressnews.com/news/local/article/DRT-bids-farewell-to-110-year-Alamo-role-6376255.php>

From many people involved with the Alamo, there seems to be a lot of agreement that the repairs were going to be very costly and that it was probably better for the land office to oversee the restoration project, but what most don't agree with is the way in which the General Land Office (GLO) went about removing the Daughters. Allegedly, the Daughters woke up one day, went into their offices, but couldn't get in because the locks had been changed and property, including computers and artifacts, some of which didn't belong to the Daughters or the GLO, but to individuals, were locked inside and access was denied.

The Daughters took Commissioner George P. Bush to court and a settlement was reached in June of 2016 in which the GLO admitted that it didn't own the artifacts and agreed to reimburse the Daughters for \$200,000 in legal expenses. <https://www.texastribune.org/2016/06/24/bush-reaches-settlement-former-alamo-managers/>

Over the past two years, yearly memorial ceremonies for those lost at the Alamo that have been taking place on the grounds of the Alamo have been stopped, and groups that have been laying memorial wreaths in commemoration of the Alamo fallen have been denied.

In May, the City of San Antonio voted to accept conceptual recommendations of the Master Plan of the Reimagine the Alamo project to move the cenotaph which is the monument depicting Travis, Bowie, Crockett and others, to an undisclosed place away from the grounds of the Alamo. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0kPksXYjII>

Reimagine the Alamo began in 2015 with the design firm of Preservation Design Partnership (PDP) led by George Skarmeeas who was in 2011 appointed to be the US committee member for UNESCO <https://www.aiaphiladelphia.org/news/george-c-skarmeeas-appointed-us-national-commission-unesco>.

As citizens started to review the plans for the project and questions were raised, townhall meetings started to take place in March of this year, regarding the Reimagine Project.

Citizens have major concerns over the change that seems to be taking place in regard to the significance of the Alamo in the history of our state. Mr. Skarmeeas has been recorded on video during these townhalls saying that what happened at the Alamo that day in 1836 was only a very small part of the overall history of the site. The Alamo is also being referred to as the Mission San Antonio de Valero and its significance as a mission is being showcased.

In an article that he wrote in 2016, he referred to the Alamo as being owned by the citizens of the world, which is how world heritage sites are viewed according to UNESCO <http://whc.unesco.org/en/about/>. It's worth the time to read the article written by Mr. Skarmeeas as it lays out exactly what the thought process is regarding the significance of the Alamo in the overall history of the state <http://www.mysanantonio.com/opinion/commentary/article/A-master-plan-and-responsible-stewardship-for-the-8381108.php>.

At the time of this writing, it is rumored that Mr. Skarmeeas is no longer the lead on this project, but Lone Star Voice has been unable to verify this. It also needs to be noted that the UN nor UNESCO have any decision-making authority for the Alamo. All authority for decisions regarding the property are under the GLO and the City of San Antonio for portions owned by the City of San Antonio.

Another concern that is being voiced is the fact that there have been several open records requests filed with the GLO and the several non-profits, which receive large amounts of taxpayer dollars from the GLO, that have gone unfulfilled. These non-profits are working with the GLO and the City of San Antonio on the Alamo project. Citizens want to know where and how their money is being spent.

The GLO says that it is complying and the agency itself may well be, but the rub seems to be with the non-profits. It seems there is an opaque law that allows non-profits who are receiving large sums of taxpayer dollars to withhold records.

The Alamo is one of the most important, if not the most important, monument to the history of our state. Without the battle, there would be no Texas as it is today and there would be no people of Texas as they are today.

Most people agree that monies are needed for the restoration of the Alamo and the plan to bring the Alamo site back as closely as possible to the original battlefield as it was in 1836 is a great idea, but what is not being agreed with is the lack of transparency to the taxpayer nor the way in which it seems those guiding the project want to homogenize its history for all "citizens of the world".

The Alamo has stood for years as the point in history that Texans have looked to for their identity as a people of grit, courage, and principle. Citizens of this state need to become engaged and make sure that the history remains and that future generations will understand the significance of what happened on that day when Travis penned his famous letter.

Commandancy of The Alamo

Bejar, Feby. 24th. 1836

To the People of Texas & All Americans in the World—

Fellow Citizens & compatriots—

I am besieged, by a thousand or more of the Mexicans under Santa Anna — I have sustained a continual Bombardment & cannonade for 24 hours & have not lost a man — The enemy has demanded a surrender at discretion, otherwise, the garrison are to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken — I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, & our flag still waves proudly from the walls — I shall never surrender or retreat. Then, I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism & everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid, with all dispatch — The enemy is receiving reinforcements daily & will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days. If this call is neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible & die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor & that of his country — **Victory or Death.**

William Barrett Travis.

Lt. Col. comdt.

P. S. The Lord is on our side — When the enemy appeared in sight we had not three bushels of corn — We have since found in deserted houses 80 or 90 bushels and got into the walls 20 or 30 head of Beeves.

Travis