

1 **ESCALANTE HERITAGE HOLE-IN-THE-ROCK**

2 **CENTER JOINT RESOLUTION**

3 2010 GENERAL SESSION

4 STATE OF UTAH

5 **Chief Sponsor: Dennis E. Stowell**

6 House Sponsor: Michael E. Noel

8 **LONG TITLE**

9 **General Description:**

10 This joint resolution of the Legislature expresses support for the construction of a
11 Heritage Center in Escalante, Utah, and for improvements to the Hole-in-the-Rock
12 Road, to highlight the journey of the San Juan/Hole-in-the-Rock colonizing expedition
13 during the winter of 1879-80 and to preserve the history of the most difficult
14 colonizing expedition in all of the West.

15 **Highlighted Provisions:**

16 This resolution:

17 ▶ expresses support for the Escalante Heritage Center's effort to preserve the history
18 of the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers, the history of the early explorations of the
19 Escalante Valley, and the settlement of the town Escalante in 1876 through the
20 heroic efforts of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to
21 follow the call of their leader to colonize and tame a part of the frontier; and

22 ▶ expresses support for improving safety and year round travel on the
23 Hole-in-the-Rock Road.

24 ▶ **Special Clauses:**

25 None

27 *Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

28 WHEREAS, in 1879, citizens of towns throughout Southern Utah answered the call of
29 John Taylor, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to colonize one of

30 the most remote parts of the Territory of Utah;

31 WHEREAS, taking what these colonizers thought would be a shortcut to the San Juan
32 area, they traveled through the frontier town of Escalante, which was settled in 1876, to the
33 Colorado River where they blasted and chiseled out a road in the crack of the canyon wall,
34 descending one thousand feet to the Colorado River;

35 WHEREAS, while this was the most difficult part of the trek, it was only one of many
36 difficulties they experienced before reaching their destination and establishing a settlement at
37 Bluff, Utah;

38 WHEREAS, what they thought would be a six-week journey took six months;

39 WHEREAS, the road these individuals created on their journey became the first road
40 in the Territory of Utah, traveling from west to east, to be funded by the Legislature, though it
41 cost only a few thousand dollars to purchase dynamite to blast through the walls of the
42 Hole-in-the-Rock;

43 WHEREAS, during the winter of 1879-80, 250 men, women, and children, trailing
44 over 1,000 head of livestock, blazed a trail through 200 miles of the most rugged terrain in the
45 West;

46 WHEREAS, Elizabeth Decker, a member of the colonizing party described it as ". . .
47 the roughest country you or anybody else ever saw. It's nothing in the world but rocks and
48 holes, hills and hollows";

49 WHEREAS, during their six-month journey, the San Juan colonizers were tempered
50 like fine steel for the formidable task of tilling the land and establishing law and order;

51 WHEREAS, in reaching the San Juan area, the colonizers demonstrated unwavering
52 faith and devotion to duty and set the standard for future generations;

53 WHEREAS, in 2002, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints donated nine
54 acres of land in Escalante to build a Heritage Center, and also donated a water meter, which
55 was critical in allowing the project to move ahead;

56 WHEREAS, in 2007, the Richfield office of the Utah Department of Transportation
57 granted the Escalante Heritage Center \$125,000 to do a feasibility study, which was performed

58 by Landmark Design of Salt Lake City and completed in 2008;

59 WHEREAS, in 2009, the Salt Lake City office of the Utah Department of
60 Transportation granted the Escalante Heritage Center \$500,000 to build the first of four phases
61 of the project;

62 WHEREAS, the Escalante Heritage Center is a nonprofit corporation engaged in
63 raising private and public funds to construct and maintain a center dedicated to preserving the
64 history and heritage of the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers and the Escalante area;

65 WHEREAS, the state transportation improvement program includes \$200,000 for
66 preliminary engineering to improve Hole-in-the-Rock Road;

67 WHEREAS, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has expressly recognized in an
68 administrative determination in 1988 that Garfield County owns an R.S. 2477 right-of-way for
69 the Hole-in-the-Rock Road;

70 WHEREAS, Garfield County, Kane County, and the state of Utah have valid
71 documentation that this road has been in existence since 1879 and has been in continuous use
72 for over 131 years;

73 WHEREAS, Garfield County, Kane County, and the state of Utah have expended
74 public tax monies to improve and maintain this road and other R.S. 2477 roads in their
75 respective counties for access to BLM and National Park Service-managed lands;

76 WHEREAS, Kane County has filed a Quiet Title Action to secure forever the property
77 right to this road and other roads in the county;

78 WHEREAS, this case, called the Hole-in-the-Rock Quiet Title Action, will be heard in
79 federal court in the near future;

80 WHEREAS, the Garfield County Commission fully supports this endeavor and is the
81 government sponsor of the project;

82 WHEREAS, the Mayor and City Council of Escalante fully support the Escalante
83 Heritage Center in its endeavor to preserve the history and heritage of the area;

84 WHEREAS, the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area project has declared the
85 building of the Escalante Heritage Center its top priority project;

86 WHEREAS, the Escalante Heritage Center Board has received letters of support from
87 officials of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the offices of both Senators Hatch
88 and Bennett, and the office of Congressman Jim Matheson;

89 WHEREAS, the Escalante Heritage Center Board has the support of officials of the
90 Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument, who feel that a science center on one side of
91 the town of Escalante and a history center on the other side would represent bookends of
92 learning for everyone visiting the area; and

93 WHEREAS, Garfield County has received a letter of support from the Grand Staircase
94 Escalante National Monument for road improvements:

95 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah
96 expresses its support for the Escalante Heritage/Hole-in-the-Rock Center Board's efforts to
97 preserve the history of the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers and the settlement of the Escalante area,
98 and to construct a building in which to tell the story of these historic pioneers and to improve
99 the road over which they traveled.

100 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Escalante
101 Heritage Center Board, the Garfield County Commission, the Mayor and City Council of
102 Escalante City, the Richfield and Salt Lake City offices of the Utah Department of
103 Transportation, Landmark Design, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and to the
104 members of Utah's congressional delegation.