

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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By: Wentworth
Administration
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The State of Texas has traditionally recognized a variety of official state symbols as tangible representations of the proud spirit and heritage of our state. In the field of music, Texas has nurtured important developments in a variety of genres, but of the many styles that have thrived here, one is particularly emblematic of our state's unique character: western swing. A lively sound that has enjoyed enduring popularity over the course of nearly a century, western swing reflects the ethnic diversity of Texas by encompassing many of the musical traditions that were introduced to the state by the groups that settled here. The genre, also known by the fitting name of Texas swing, traces its origins to the 1920s and is rooted in the fiddle music of Anglo, Irish, and Scottish immigrants. It borrows heavily from many other sources, however, including such African American influences as blues and jazz, the Hispanic genres of conjunto and mariachi, and the polkas, waltzes, and schottisches brought to Texas by German and Czech settlers.

Though western swing has become popular throughout the Southwest and beyond, its origins are firmly tied to the Lone Star State. Growing out of the music that was played in the state's small-town dance halls, the style became better known through the work of Texans Milton Brown and Bob Wills, two of the most famous and influential swing artists of all time. These pioneers formed the Light Crust Doughboys in the Fort Worth area in the early 1930s and then went on to even greater fame while leading individual bands of their own.

A key to the appeal of this spirited music is its exceptional ability to get people dancing. This quality, too, is evocative of Texas, a state in which dance halls have historically been central to the social life of its communities. Today, the foot-tapping tempo of western swing continues to be heard all across our state, with countless Texans repeating the time-honored steps that have been kicking up sawdust on Texas dance floors for generations.

Born and bred in Texas, western swing is a musical melting pot that represents the diverse groups that have contributed to the growth and prosperity of our state and the distinctive way of life that has flourished here, and it is indeed a fitting symbol for the rich cultural heritage that is shared by all Texans.

RESOLVED

That the 82nd Legislature of the State of Texas hereby designate western swing as the official State Music of Texas.