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For Immediate Release:

**Washington on the Brazos to mark 180th Anniversary of Texas Independence
and 100th Birthday of this State Park**

2016 will be an especially important year for [Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site](#): not only is it the 180th anniversary of the signing of the Texas Declaration of Independence from Mexico in 1836 at Washington on the Brazos, but it will also be the state park's 100th birthday. It was March 2, 1836 when 59 delegates bravely met in Washington, Texas to make a formal declaration of independence from Mexico. From 1836 until 1846, the Republic of Texas proudly existed as a separate nation.

To commemorate the 180th anniversary of Texas Independence, the three entities that administer and support this site—Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept (TPWD), Blinn College and Washington on the Brazos State Park Association—are planning some Texas-sized celebrations.

“**Texas Independence Day Celebration**” (TIDC) is an annual two-day celebration from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, March 5 and Sunday, March 6, 2016 on the expansive 293-acre park grounds and its three incredible attractions: [Star of the Republic Museum](#) (collections and programs honoring history of early Texans, administered by Blinn College); [Independence Hall](#) (replica of the site where representatives wrote the Texas Declaration of Independence); and [Barrington Living History Farm](#) (where interpreters dress, work and farm as did the original residents of this homestead). The birthday celebration features live music, food, traditional crafts, living history presentations, historical encampments and commemorative programs so guests can experience life in Texas in 1836.

Admission fees are waived for the site’s attractions (Independence Hall, Star of the Republic Museum, and Barrington Living History Farm) during the TIDC weekend celebration. Admission to the grounds, on-site shuttles and parking are also free.

In 2016, TIDC will be expanded to include some special guests and entertainment on both weekend days, including Texas A&M University Singing Cadets; the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band performing three times (on Saturday only); [Professor Farquar’s Great American Medicine Show](#) with [Polecat Annie](#); a historical play about the signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence; unveiling and book signing of “Washington on the Brazos: Cradle of the Texas Republic” by author Richard B. McCaslin (fellow of the TSHA and professor of history at the University of North Texas); family reunions of the descendants of the 59 men who signed the Declaration; and additional historical reenactments. A Kid Zone will allow children to dress up in historical costumes; sign a large scale copy of the Declaration; and takes photos near the Declaration.

The Star of the Republic Museum at WOB will celebrate the 180th anniversary with its new exhibit “A Legacy of Leadership: The Signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence.” Elected as delegates to the Constitutional Convention in 1836, these men determined the future of Texas. Amongst them were 12 lawyers, five physicians, four surveyors and three each of planters, empresarios and merchants. The exhibit will focus on

their roles as leaders and includes personal artifacts such as Sam Maverick's buckskins, a cameo of Michel Menard, oil portraits of Stephen Blount and his wife, and many others items.

And—just as they did 180 years ago—riders on horseback will make their way down La Bahia Road and into the Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site to deliver letters from Alamo commander William Barret Travis to Washington on the Brazos, timed in conjunction with the annual Texas Independence Day Celebration at this state park.

Called the “**Ride for Texas Independence**,” interpretive staff from area historical sites—led by Scott McMahon, Director, Presidio La Bahia—will retrace on horseback the route the couriers traveled in 1836 as closely as possible, while dressed in period clothing and using riding tack authentic to that used during the Texian War for Independence. The ride will begin on February 24, 2016 on the grounds of the Alamo and travel through towns including Seguin, Gonzales, Shiner, San Felipe, Belmont, Sublime, Altair and Beard until reaching WOB on Saturday, March 5, 2016.

The horsemen will deliver reproduction of two of the eight letters that Travis sent out while the Alamo was under siege. The well-known “Victory or Death” letter was penned on February 24, 1836 to “The People of Texas and All Americans In The World” in which he declared “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. . . . 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.”

The second letter was written on March 3, 1836 to Jesse Grimes, delegate at the Convention of 1836 and signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence, in which he declared “Let the Convention go on and make a declaration of independence, and we will then understand, and the world will understand, what we are fighting for. If independence is not declared, I shall lay down my arms, and so will the men under my command.”

Other events and programs throughout the 180th anniversary year are being finalized at the seven historic sites associated with the Texas Revolution: Gonzales, San Felipe, San Antonio Missions, the Alamo, Washington on the Brazos, Goliad and San Jacinto Monument.

[Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site:](#)

This TPWD-run state park has many onsite amenities open daily, as well as an incredible schedule of events and programs. On-site attractions include [Independence Hall](#); the [Star of the Republic Museum](#) and [Barrington Living History Farm](#). The site's Visitor Center features interactive exhibits which present a timeline of the Texas Revolution and highlight the historic attractions located within the park; it also houses the spacious Washington Emporium Gift Shop, which offers snacks and a wide range of Texas-themed items and keepsakes. The [Fanthorp Inn State Historic Site](#) is a authentically preserved example of a 19th century stagecoach inn, located nearby in Anderson, TX. Entrance to the park grounds, Visitor Center and parking is always free.

The Park: The expansive park grounds along the Brazos River also provide a beautiful setting for picnicking, sightseeing and bird watching, as well as four geocaching sites—two each from TPWD and the Brenham/Washington County Chamber and CVB. It also features a Conference Center which is perfect for meetings, weddings and reunions. The Education Center with a main auditorium and two classroom style spaces are perfect for smaller groups. An outdoor amphitheater and two pavilions are also available for rent.

Park Association membership levels are available for individuals, families and businesses and include free admission to the Site's attractions for a year, including—for some levels—private parties during the park's special celebrations.

Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site is located on the Brazos River at the original townsite of Washington, Texas, a major political and commercial center in early Texas. It is located at 23400 Park Road

12, Washington, TX, 77880—approximately halfway between Brenham and Navasota, off of State Hwy. 105. From Hwy. 105, follow either FM 912 or FM 1155 to Park Road 12.

Updates on the all festivities, including TIDC and the 180th celebrations, are continually posted at www.wheretexasbecametexas.org; the public can contact office@wheretexasbecametexas.org or (936) 878-2214 for more information.