Texas Annexation Essay, Research Paper

Narrative History of Texas Annexation, Secession, and Readmission to the Union

Texans voted in favor of annexation to the United States in the first election following independence in 1836. However, throughout the Republic period (1836-1845) no treaty of annexation negotiated between the Republic and the United States was ratified by both nations.

When all attempts to arrive at a formal annexation treaty failed, the United States Congress passed–after much debate and only a simple majority–a Joint Resolution for Annexing Texas to the United States. Under these terms, Texas would keep both its public lands and its public debt, it would have the power to divide into four additional states "of convenient size" in the future if it so desired, and it would deliver all military, postal, and customs facilities and authority to the United States government. (Neither this joint resolution or the ordinance passed by the Republic of Texas’ Annexation Convention gave Texas the right to secede.)

In July 1845, a popularly-elected Constitutional Convention met in Austin to consider both this annexation proposal as well as a proposed peace treaty with Mexico which would end the state of war between the two nations, but only if Texas remained an independent country.

The Convention voted to accept the United States’ proposal, and the Annexation Ordinance was submitted to a popular vote in October 1845. The proposed Annexation Ordinance and State Constitution were approved by the Texas voters and submitted to the United States Congress.

The United States House and Senate, in turn, accepted the Texas state constitution in a Joint Resolution to admit Texas as a State which was signed by the president on December 29, 1845 . Although the formal transfer of government did not occur until February 19, 1846, Texas statehood dates from the 29th of December.

Opposition to Texas’ admission to the United States was particularly strong in the North during this period. If a challenge to the constitutionality of the move could have been made successfully at that time, there is little doubt that the leaders of the opposition would have instituted such a suit in the Supreme Court.

Sixteen years later, in January 1861, the Secession Convention met in Austin and adopted an Ordinance of Secession on February 1 and a Declaration of Causes on February 2. This proposal was approved by the voters, but even before Texas could become "independent" as provided for in the text of the Ordinance, it was accepted by the Provisional Government of the Confederate States of America as a state on March 1, 1861.

The Secession Convention, reconvened on March 2, approved an ordinance accepting Confederate statehood on March 5. Texas delegates to the Provisional Confederate Government had already been elected, and they were among those who approved the proposed Confederate Constitution. Their action was confirmed by the Secession Convention on March 23.

Throughout the Civil War period, Texas existed as a state in the Confederate States of America, its status confirmed by the elected representatives of the Texas citizens. (Sam Houston, although accepting the decision of the electorate to secede, protested the Convention’s decision to join the Confederacy since the matter was not submitted to popular vote. His opposition was insufficient to cause either the voters or the members of the state legislature to put aside the actions of the Convention.) John H. Reagan, a Texan, was the Postmaster General of the C.S.A., and other Texans held prominent government posts throughout the period.

When the war ended in April 1865, Texas was still considered to be in revolt (the last battle of the Civil War was fought on Texas soil after the surrender at Appomattox). Although a state of peace was declared as existing between the United States and the other Southern States on April 2, 1866, President Andrew Johnson did not issue a similar proclamation of peace between the U.S. and Texas until August 20, 1866, even though the Constitutional Convention of 1866 had approved on March 15, 1866 an ordinance to nullify the actions of the Secession Convention

Southern States remained under military government until their legislatures adopted the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the United States Constitution. Their readmission to full national status varied from state to state (Georgia was readmitted twice).

In April 1869, the U.S. Congress passed an Act authorizing voters of Virginia, Mississippi and Texas to vote on their new state constitutions and to elect state officers and Members of Congress. Three months later, President U.S. Grant signed a proclamation submitting the Texas Constitution to the voters of the state.

Texans voted on a revised state constitution in November 1869 and elected a state government. Once convened, the legislature voted to ratify the 14th and 15th amendments to the U.S. Constitution (the 13th amendment having already been fully ratified) and elected two U.S. Senators, thereby completing the requirements for reinstatement. President Grant signed the act to readmit Texas to Congressional representation on March 30, 1870, and this federal act was promulgated throughout Texas by a general order issued by General Reynolds on April 16, 1870.

No requirement exists — either in the Reconstruction Acts governing the rebel states or in the document readmitting Texas to full statehood — for the governor of Texas to sign a document reaffirming Texas’ position as a state within the United States republic. The only ongoing requirement of Texas government was that no constitutional revision should deny the vote or school rights to any citizen of the United States.

A thorough check of the volumes of federal statutes for the entire period of Reconstruction (1865-1870) and through 1872 revealed no other legislation requiring further proof of submission to the U.S. government on the part of Texas or any other of the "rebel states."