

**HIGHWAY BEAUTIFICATION AND MRS. LYNDON JOHNSON**  
(Read only)

- \* **A Longtime Commitment.** As First Lady from 1963 to 1969, Mrs. Johnson was an early supporter of environmental protection and highway beautification, expanding nationwide a Texas tradition of support for roadside parks and plantings dating to 1929.
  
- \* **The Highway Beautification Act of 1965:** Mrs. Johnson lobbied key congressmen to pass this landmark bill, saying "we are obligated to leave the country looking as good if not better than we found it." The bill enabled improved landscaping, the removal of billboards, and screening of roadside junkyards. Its passage is considered one of her most important achievements.
  
- \* **The National Wildflower Research Center:** After President Johnson left office in 1969, Mrs. Johnson continued her sponsorship of environmental initiatives, especially those to enhance the nation's highways. On her 70th birthday in 1982, Mrs. Johnson founded this center to support research on native wildflowers and to promote their planting nationwide.
  
- \* **Wildflower summit:** In 1987 Mrs. Johnson sponsored a summit on wildflower programs, bringing together programs from five states (including Texas) and asking them what they needed. Her efforts, supported by Senator Lloyd Bentsen of Texas during that year's federal surface transportation program reauthorization, helped to create a requirement that ¼ of one percent of the landscape budget of federally-funded highway construction projects be devoted to planting native wildflowers. The federal commitment also includes more funding for related research, public-private partnerships, and support for the restoration and preservation of wildflowers and other native plants.
  
- \* **Continued involvement:** Mrs. Johnson has continued her involvement in beautification issues, meeting in 1993 with Secretary Peña and FHWA Deputy Administrator Garvey to discuss the status of wildflower programs and publishing her book *Wildflowers Across America* that same year. She also has promoted research on the biological and aesthetic importance of wildflowers native to the places in which they are planted: "Vermont should look like Vermont, California like California, and Texas like Texas."
  
- \* **Mrs. Johnson on beautification:** "When I found myself in the White House, it was natural -- and inevitable -- for me to turn to the movement we called beautification. (We never could think of a better word!)... Though the word 'beautification' makes the concept sound merely cosmetic, it involves much more: clean water, clean air, clean roadsides... To me, in sum, beautification means our total concern for the physical and human quality we pass on to our children and the future."

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