

District Ornament Project at the Texas State Capitol

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What makes your community special? Since 2009, Texas artists have captured the spirit of their House Districts on glass ornaments used to decorate the House Chamber's 25-foot Christmas tree. The District Ornament Project tradition started when Julie Straus, wife of Speaker Joe Straus, was contemplating how to decorate such a large tree. Fortunately, Texas is a large state, with 150 districts, and has plenty of talented artists to help out.

"We bought hundreds of these clear glass ornaments and invited members to identify something special about their district, something about the way their community celebrated Christmas, and illustrate that on one of these ornaments," Straus said. "What came back was just beyond anything we ever could have imagined."

Some districts' ornaments are painted by Representatives' family members, some by professional artists, some by school children. Ornaments may represent superlatives—such as a rose-themed ornament for District 6, in honor of Tyler's nickname "The Rose Capital of America." They may depict local heroes, such as the portrait of Waco-born WWII hero Doris Miller on the District 56 ornament for 2015. Many are just full of holiday cheer! The tree will be on display at the State Capitol through January 3, but to get a closer look at the ornaments, an album is compiled each year and posted [online](#). You also can see some of this year's ornaments in this [photo set](#) from the *San Antonio Express-News*.

1) From birds to grapefruits and much more, the District Ornament Project showcases the diversity of Texas' natural and human resources.

2) The Senate Christmas tree is a new tradition and also features ornaments celebrating Texas and its citizens.

3) In recent years, the Senate's holiday tradition was to decorate with poinsettias on the desks. In 2015, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick decided to add a tree "to make the Christmas spirit in the Capitol even bigger."