

By: Hughes, Campbell, Hancock

S.R. No. 93

SENATE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, An exemplary life devoted to public service drew to a close with the death of former federal judge and FBI director William Steele Sessions of San Antonio on June 12, 2020, at the age of 90; and

WHEREAS, Bill Sessions was born on May 27, 1930, in Fort Smith, Arkansas, to Will and Edith Steele Sessions; afflicted with polio as an adolescent, he overcame the disease to become an Eagle Scout and a successful high school athlete; in 1948, he entered the University of Kansas, and with the escalation of the Korean War, he answered his nation's call to duty by joining the U.S. Air Force in 1951; he served as a radar intercept officer until 1955, flying more than a thousand hours aboard B-25 aircraft and attaining the rank of captain; and

WHEREAS, While still in the military, Mr. Sessions attended night classes at Baylor University, earning a bachelor's degree in economics in 1956, and he went on to receive his law degree from Baylor in 1958; after starting his own practice, he joined the Waco firm of Haley, Fulbright, Winniford, Sessions and Bice, and he became president of the local bar association and director of the State Junior Bar of Texas; during his time in Waco, he also served as a lay leader and Sunday school teacher for Trinity Methodist Church; and

WHEREAS, Active in Republican politics, Mr. Sessions

supported campaigns by George H. W. Bush and John Tower, and in 1969, he was elected to the city council in Waco; he joined the federal government in the 1970s and served as chief of the Government Operations Section for the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice and as U.S. attorney, U.S. district judge, and chief judge for the Western District of Texas, presiding over the high-profile trials concerning the murder of U.S. district judge John H. Wood; and

WHEREAS, In 1987, Mr. Sessions was nominated by President Ronald Reagan as director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and he was confirmed by the U.S. Senate with a vote of 90 to 0; over the course of his six-year tenure, he served under three presidents, helped increase opportunities for women and people of color, expanded the bureau's role in combating international terrorism, and updated the agency's technology to adopt the use of DNA in forensics and to implement a digital fingerprint identification system; and

WHEREAS, After stepping down as director in 1993, Mr. Sessions returned to private practice as a mediator and arbitrator for the National Patent Board, first in San Antonio and then with the firm of Holland & Knight in Washington, D.C., and he worked well into his 80s, until retiring in January 2017; he also served on several committees of the American Bar Association and worked with the Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., and the Constitution Project; he consulted with the State of Texas on security and cyberterrorism issues; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Sessions was married to the former Alice June

Lewis for 66 years until her death in 2019, and he was the proud father of five children, Lewis, Pete, Mark, Sara, and the late Jonathan Avent Sessions; with the passing years, he welcomed into his family nine grandchildren and six great-grandchildren; he enjoyed an active life of camping and canoeing, and in the 1980s, he twice trekked to the base of Mount Everest; and

WHEREAS, Bill Sessions distinguished himself through his tireless commitment to serving his fellow citizens, and he leaves behind a legacy of integrity, dedication, and resilience that will continue to inspire all those who knew and loved him; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of the 87th Texas Legislature, 3rd Called Session, hereby pay tribute to the memory of William Steele Sessions and extend heartfelt sympathy to his relatives and many friends; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be prepared for his family and that when the Texas Senate adjourns this day, it do so in memory of William Sessions.