

By: Geren

H.R. No. 27

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, The life of an esteemed community leader and
2 legendary rodeo showman drew to a close with the passing of
3 W. R. Watt Jr. of Fort Worth on November 9, 2022, at the age of 88;
4 and

5 WHEREAS, Born in Fort Worth on March 29, 1934, Bob Watt was
6 the son of W. R. Watt Sr. and the former Helen Wallace; he grew up
7 with the companionship of his brother, Tom, and from an early age,
8 he devoted considerable time to the family ranch in Throckmorton
9 County; after attending Arlington Heights High School and the Hill
10 School, he received a bachelor's degree in animal husbandry from
11 Oklahoma State University; he oversaw the cow-calf operation at
12 Watt Ranch for more than a half century, and he was a passionate
13 steward of the land and livestock; and

14 WHEREAS, Mr. Watt began working for the Fort Worth Stock Show
15 and Rodeo on a part-time basis in 1955, between college semesters;
16 elected to the board in 1958, he went on to serve for 64 years,
17 encompassing both a stint as secretary and a remarkable 33 years as
18 president; he was also very active in a number of other roles, from
19 assistant to the livestock and horse show managers to general
20 manager; upon his retirement in 2010, he was named president
21 emeritus; and

22 WHEREAS, A skilled consensus-builder and man of vision,
23 Mr. Watt was instrumental in the phenomenal growth of the rodeo;
24 during his presidency, it expanded from 10 to 23 days, drawing a

1 million visitors each year as Fort Worth's most-attended annual
2 public event; along the way, Mr. Watt helped create a national
3 model for public-private funding of public events facilities; he
4 worked with local officials to effect the transformation of the
5 Will Rogers Memorial Center, and in the 1980s, he oversaw
6 development of the Amon G. Carter Jr. Exhibits Hall and the
7 world-class Will Rogers Equestrian Center; in 1996, the Stock Show
8 celebrated its centennial with the opening of the Charlie and Kit
9 Moncrief Building and its W. R. Watt Arena; funded by \$11 million
10 from Stock Show supporters, the arena was named for Mr. Watt's
11 father; Mr. Watt also led the effort to fund and build the ticket
12 office and visitor's center at the main entrance of the Will Rogers
13 Memorial Center; and

14 WHEREAS, The Will Rogers Memorial Center was pivotal in Fort
15 Worth's ascension as the country's premier location for livestock
16 and equestrian competitions; annual entries from livestock and
17 equestrian exhibitors eventually surpassed 30,000, and Mr. Watt
18 founded an International Committee and facility to welcome guests
19 from approximately 55 nations; his advocacy resulted in adoption of
20 a new official name, Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show, to
21 better reflect the importance of ranchers and farmers in meeting
22 consumer demand; other innovations during his tenure included the
23 Best of Mexico Celebración and the Cowboys of Color Rodeo; and

24 WHEREAS, Mr. Watt shared his expertise with numerous
25 organizations; he served as director of the Professional Rodeo
26 Cowboys Association, director and president of the North American
27 Livestock Show and Rodeo Managers Association, director and

1 honorary vice president of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle
2 Raisers Association, and director of the Texas Livestock Marketing
3 Association and Texas FFA Foundation; moreover, he gave extensively
4 of his time and talents to benefit many other charitable,
5 community, and professional organizations; his efforts were key in
6 the creation of the Citizens Support Group for the Fort Worth Police
7 Department Mounted Patrol, and he continued to support its
8 endeavors, such as the provision of horses and equipment and
9 construction of a state-of-the-art equine boarding and training
10 facility; in addition, he helped establish the Tarrant County
11 chapter of the Make-A-Wish Foundation, and he was a highly engaged
12 benefactor of the North Texas Chapter; he was a director of the Jane
13 and John Justin Foundation and First Methodist Church of Fort Worth
14 Foundation, as well as a member of the board of Harris Methodist
15 Hospital; and

16 WHEREAS, Inducted into the Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame,
17 Mr. Watt garnered numerous accolades for his contributions to the
18 livestock industry and to his community, among them the People of
19 Vision Award, Oklahoma State University Distinguished Alumni
20 Award, Texas Hereford Association Outstanding Service Award, and
21 Longhorn Council of the Boy Scouts of America Distinguished Citizen
22 Award; he and his father were joint recipients of the Charles
23 Goodnight Award, and in 2022, he and his family were honored with
24 the Bill King Award from the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo; for
25 all his success, he remained modest and kind; he freely expressed
26 his appreciation to the Stock Show staff, volunteers, and
27 supporters, and he was a mentor to many; and

1 WHEREAS, Mr. Watt enjoyed fishing, especially in the waters
2 off South Padre Island, and playing golf, particularly at River
3 Crest Country Club; above all, he cherished time spent with his
4 treasured family, whether pursuing their hobbies together, staying
5 at the ranch, or watching Stock Show rodeo performances from his box
6 at his beloved Will Rogers Coliseum; he shared a fulfilling
7 marriage with his wife, Jerri Anne Watt, and he took great pride in
8 his daughter, Susan, in his son, Trey, who preceded him in death,
9 and in his stepson, Mike; through the years, he was blessed with
10 seven grandchildren and a great-granddaughter; and

11 WHEREAS, Bob Watt made a tremendous positive impact in the
12 Fort Worth area and beyond, earning the lasting respect and
13 admiration of his fellow citizens, and although he is sadly missed
14 by all who were fortunate enough to know him, his achievements will
15 continue to resonate for years to come; now, therefore, be it

16 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 88th Texas
17 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the memory of W. R. "Bob" Watt Jr.
18 and extend deepest sympathy to the members of his family: to his
19 wife, Jerri Anne Watt; to his daughter, Susan Watt; to his stepson,
20 Mike McCrary, and his wife, Erica; to his brother, Tom Watt, and his
21 wife, Betty; to his grandchildren, W. R. Watt IV and his wife, Mary
22 Margaret, Callie A. Watt, Weston Wills, Walton Wills, Watt Wills,
23 Davis McCrary, and Sienna McCrary; to his great-granddaughter,
24 Georgia Watt; and to his nephews, Mike Watt and his wife, Laura, and
25 Rob Watt and his wife, Peggy; pallbearers for the memorial service
26 include: Watt Wills, Walton Wills, Weston Wills, Davis McCrary,
27 Billy Bob Watt, and Reese Watt; honorary pallbearers include: Bill

H.R. No. 27

1 Anderson, Brad Barnes, Ed Bass, Matt Brockman, Jim Gay, Charlie
2 Geren, Charles Lasater, Mike Sands, Bob Tallman, Roy Topham, and
3 J. R. Williams; and, be it further

4 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
5 prepared for his family and that when the Texas House of
6 Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Bob Watt.