

By: Bryant

H.R. No. 2439

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, Former U.S. Congressman Charlie Stenholm of
2 Granbury, a major architect of the nation's agricultural policy,
3 passed away on May 17, 2023, at the age of 84, bringing a great loss
4 to his family and many friends across West Texas and beyond; and

5 WHEREAS, The son of Lambert and Irene Stenholm, Charles
6 Walter Stenholm was born in Stamford on October 26, 1938, and grew
7 up on the family farm in the Swedish Lutheran community of
8 Ericksdahl; he earned bachelor's and master's degrees in
9 agricultural education at Texas Tech University and began teaching
10 in Avoca while also helping his father grow cotton and wheat and
11 raise cattle; hired to advocate for Rolling Plains Cotton Growers,
12 he also served as president of the Texas Rural Electric Cooperative
13 Association; he was appointed to the Texas State Agricultural
14 Stabilization and Conservation Service, now the Farm Service
15 Agency, and in 1978, he was elected to represent the 17th
16 Congressional District; and

17 WHEREAS, Mr. Stenholm was an ardent champion of rural Texas
18 and played a key role in shaping and passing every farm bill during
19 his 26 years in the U.S. House of Representatives; in the 1980s, he
20 helped formulate legislation that rescued the Farm Credit System
21 from financial distress; he assisted in drafting legislation that
22 reorganized the U.S. Department of Agriculture during the Clinton
23 administration, and he was instrumental in reforming the federal
24 crop insurance system to better protect family farmers; and

1 WHEREAS, A conservative Democrat and founder of the Blue Dog
2 Coalition, Mr. Stenholm was known for his ability to work across
3 the aisle in Washington, staying genial, calm, and patient no
4 matter how heated the discussion; he helped garner Democratic
5 support for President Ronald Reagan's tax cuts and fervently
6 supported a balanced budget amendment; as ranking member on the
7 House Committee on Agriculture, he teamed with the chair, Lubbock
8 Republican Larry Combest, to win passage of a new farm bill that
9 doubled subsidies for Texas agribusiness; the pair often worked
10 together on such legislation as the Water Pollution Program
11 Improvement Act and the Carousel Retaliation Act; and

12 WHEREAS, Mr. Stenholm valued the opinions of others but stood
13 firmly by his principles even when inconvenient; although the
14 flag-burning amendment had local support, his belief in the
15 constitutional protection of free expression led him to vote
16 against it; those who might disagree with his position on an issue
17 nevertheless respected his honesty and integrity; he remained close
18 to his commonsense upbringing, and whenever he felt he might be
19 straying too far into the Washington mindset, he spent some time
20 riding a tractor on his 2,000-acre cotton and cattle farm;
21 colleagues described him as the kind of citizen-legislator the
22 nation's founders envisioned; and

23 WHEREAS, Redistricting cost Mr. Stenholm his seat in 2004,
24 but he continued to work on behalf of agricultural development and
25 safety and to promote fiscal conservatism and bipartisanship; he
26 became a senior policy advisor for the Washington firm Olsson Frank
27 Weeda Terman Matz PC and later joined the faculty of Tarleton State

1 University as an adjunct professor; in addition, he took a
2 leadership role with Farm Foundation, moderating many of its forums
3 at the National Press Club to increase understanding of farm and
4 food issues; much in demand as a public speaker, he also wrote
5 newspaper articles and served on the boards of such organizations
6 as the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget and the Concord
7 Coalition; he was a man of faith and a member of both Emmanuel
8 Lutheran Church in Granbury and Bethel Lutheran Church of
9 Ericksdahl; among many accolades, he received a Distinguished
10 Alumni Award from Tarleton, and he was inducted into the
11 Cooperative Hall of Fame; and

12 WHEREAS, Charlie Stenholm devoted his career to the
13 advancement of farming and rural communities, and although he is
14 deeply missed by those he left behind, his exceptional
15 contributions will continue to resonate in the years to come; now,
16 therefore, be it

17 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 88th Texas
18 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the life of the Honorable Charles
19 Walter Stenholm and extend sincere sympathy to the members of his
20 family: to his wife of 58 years, Cynthia Stenholm; to his children,
21 Chris, Carey, and Courtney; and to all others who mourn his passing;
22 and, be it further

23 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
24 prepared for his family and that when the Texas House of
25 Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Charlie
26 Stenholm.