

By: West

S.R. No. 148

SENATE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The Texas Senate takes great pleasure in recognizing Mrs. Opal Lee, the "Grandmother of Juneteenth," who is being honored at the Texas Capitol on February 8, 2023, at a special event to celebrate the unveiling of her portrait, which will be placed on permanent display in the Senate Chamber; and

WHEREAS, Commissioned by the Texas Senate and created by native Texas artist Jess W. Coleman, the portrait of Mrs. Opal Lee honors her remarkable life and achievements and commemorates the indelible mark her contributions have made in the history of our great state and nation; and

WHEREAS, A native Texan born in Marshall and raised in Fort Worth, Mrs. Opal Lee was inspired from an early age to seek to better the world around her and to become an advocate for social justice and civil rights; rising above many of the challenges of racial oppression, she embarked on a career in education, and she became a tireless champion for civil rights and an esteemed community leader whose positive impact is recognized throughout the nation and has been acknowledged around the globe; and

WHEREAS, In 2016, at the age of 89, Mrs. Opal Lee launched a campaign to create a wider awareness across the country about the meaning of Juneteenth, the annual day commemorating the end of slavery in Texas; Mrs. Lee began observing the June 19 holiday while she was still a young girl living in Marshall, and for

decades, she has organized events in Fort Worth in celebration of Juneteenth; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Opal Lee long dreamed of making the annual observance of Juneteenth in Texas into a national holiday, and in her efforts to achieve this goal, she spoke to the media and numerous groups about her cause and gathered one-and-a-half million signatures on a petition that she delivered to the United States Congress; and

WHEREAS, In 2021, Mrs. Opal Lee accomplished her mission when legislation designating Juneteenth as a federal holiday was passed; she joined President Joe Biden at the White House to witness the signing of the Juneteenth legislation, and with this historic achievement, the nation gained its first new federal holiday since Martin Luther King Jr. Day was signed into law in 1983; and

WHEREAS, Long admired for her exceptional contributions to her community and state, Mrs. Lee has created an enduring legacy in the State of Texas and in the nation; in 2022, she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by 33 members of the United States Congress in recognition of her outstanding efforts in gaining national recognition for Juneteenth; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Opal Lee's steadfast dedication to a vision of liberty and justice is a source of tremendous inspiration to all, and it is indeed fitting that a portrait of her be displayed permanently in the Senate Chamber at the Texas Capitol; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of the State of Texas, 88th

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Legislature, hereby pay tribute to Mrs. Opal Lee and extend to her its sincere respect, admiration, and appreciation; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be prepared in honor of this very special occasion.