

By: Blanco

S.R. No. 424

SENATE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Residents of El Paso are mourning the loss of Willie Cager, a beloved member of the historic Texas Western University basketball team that won the 1966 national championship, who passed away on March 19, 2023, at the age of 80; and

WHEREAS, William Cager Jr. was born in the Bronx in New York City on August 24, 1942; his playing career as a member of the Texas Western basketball team began in 1964, and the following year, he was part of the legendary Miners team that became the first to win the NCAA title with five African American players in the starting lineup; the team's 72-65 victory in the championship game over an all-White squad from the University of Kentucky is widely regarded as a key turning point in the racial integration of the sport throughout the U.S., helping to usher in a new era of collegiate athletics; the win capped an amazing season for the Miners, who dropped just one contest on their way to the title; four decades later, the story was made into a major motion picture, *Glory Road*, and the team was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 2007; and

WHEREAS, A skilled low-post player nicknamed "Scoops," Mr. Cager was sidelined part way through the championship season because of a heart murmur; though he returned to action, Texas Western head coach Don Haskins was only able to play him in short

stints; he started the championship game and made an important contribution, scoring eight points, grabbing six rebounds, and making six of his seven free throws; he ultimately appeared in 77 contests for the Miners, averaging 8.5 points and 5.3 rebounds for his career; he was selected by the Baltimore Bullets in the 1968 NBA Draft, though he never played professionally; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Cager made El Paso his permanent home, and he became a notable figure in the community; he served as the coordinator of the Ysleta Independent School District's after-school basketball program and launched the Willie Cager Foundation to raise money to build multipurpose athletic and academic complexes for area youth; in 2017, he ran for mayor of El Paso; throughout his life, he was a ubiquitous presence at Miners home games, and in March of 2022, the Miner Athletic Club launched an endowed basketball scholarship in his honor; he is survived by his children, Kareem, Kenya, and Kendeea; and

WHEREAS, Renowned for his clutch play on the hardwood and his enduring contributions to his adopted hometown, Willie Cager etched his name in the history of college basketball, and his legacy will resonate in the El Paso area for years to come; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of the 88th Texas Legislature hereby pay tribute to the memory of Willie Cager 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

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this day, it do so in memory of Willie Cager.