

By: Davis of Dallas

H.R. No. 228

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, With the passing of tennis legend Althea Gibson on
2 September 28, 2003, at the age of 76, the United States has lost a
3 heroic sports figure, a woman who was both an outstanding athlete
4 and a pioneer in breaking the color barrier; and

5 WHEREAS, Ms. Gibson was born in Silver, South Carolina, on
6 August 25, 1927, and raised in Harlem; at the age of 15 she won her
7 first tennis tournament, the New York girls' state championship for
8 African-American players sponsored by the American Tennis
9 Association (ATA); in 1947 she won the first of 10 straight ATA
10 national championships; and

11 WHEREAS, Three years later, she became the first African
12 American to compete in the National Grass Court Championships, the
13 forerunner of the U.S. Open, and the following year, she became the
14 first African American to play at Wimbledon; in 1955, she was
15 selected by the U.S. State Department to participate in a
16 nine-month goodwill tour of Asia and the Far East, and her stunning
17 success--winning 14 of 17 tournaments and reaching the finals of
18 the remaining three--launched her into the top tier of her sport;
19 and

20 WHEREAS, Ms. Gibson won her first major singles title in 1956
21 when she captured the French Open; she triumphed both at Wimbledon
22 and the U.S. national championship at Forest Hills in 1957 and again
23 in 1958; and

24 WHEREAS, Renowned for her overpowering serve and aggressive

1 volleys, Althea Gibson won a total of 11 Grand Slam titles during
2 her career, including five doubles championships and one mixed
3 doubles championship; she retired from amateur competition
4 following the 1958 U.S. championship and went on to win the pro
5 title; she also toured with the Harlem Globetrotters, playing
6 exhibition tennis during halftime; and

7 WHEREAS, After her 1957 Wimbledon victory, Ms. Gibson was
8 feted with a ticker-tape parade down Broadway; the Associated Press
9 named her Female Athlete of the Year in 1957 and 1958, the years she
10 was ranked number one in the world, and in 1971 she was inducted
11 into the International Tennis Hall of Fame; and

12 WHEREAS, This accomplished woman also made her mark in golf,
13 becoming the first African American to compete on the women's
14 professional golf tour; altogether, she appeared in 171 tournaments
15 in the 1960s and 1970s; and

16 WHEREAS, For a number of years she was a public official in
17 the State of New Jersey, where she served as commissioner of
18 athletics, as a member of the state athletics control board and the
19 governor's council on physical fitness, and as recreation director
20 for the city of East Orange; her commitment to helping others was
21 also manifested by her creation of the Althea Gibson Foundation,
22 which supports urban youth who want to pursue tennis or golf at the
23 college level; and

24 WHEREAS, Althea Gibson overcame poverty and segregation to
25 dominate women's tennis in the 1950s, and her exceptional
26 achievements and contributions throughout her life are indeed
27 worthy of remembrance; now, therefore, be it

1 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 78th Texas
2 Legislature, 3rd Called Session, hereby pay special tribute to the
3 life of Althea Gibson and commemorate her courageous and generous
4 spirit.