

By: Farabee

H.R. No. 316

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, Charlye Ola Farris of Wichita Falls has established
2 a succession of firsts in the course of her 50-year legal career;
3 and

4 WHEREAS, Born and raised in Wichita Falls, Ms. Farris
5 graduated from Booker T. Washington High School in 1945 at the age
6 of 15 and from Prairie View A&M College three years later; to
7 appease her father, the first African American school
8 superintendent in Texas, and her mother, an elementary school
9 teacher for 49 years, she then accepted a position teaching third
10 and fourth graders, but after a year she resigned her position in
11 order to pursue a legal career; and

12 WHEREAS, Undaunted by the scarcity of women in her chosen
13 field and by obstacles arrayed at that time against any African
14 American who wanted to study law in Texas, Ms. Farris chose to
15 enroll at the University of Denver; she subsequently transferred to
16 Howard University, where she received her law degree in 1953; that
17 same year she returned to Texas and passed the bar exam, becoming
18 the first African American woman in the state to be licensed to
19 practice law; and

20 WHEREAS, Moving home to Wichita Falls, she also became the
21 first woman to actively practice law in Wichita County; she soon
22 added the further distinction of being the first African American
23 to serve as a judge in the South in any capacity since
24 Reconstruction when she served as special county judge, or county

1 judge pro tem, in Wichita County on July 7, 1954; and

2 WHEREAS, Following the passage of the Civil Rights Act of
3 1964, Ms. Farris moved her office from the east side of town to a
4 building by the courthouse, a location where she has hung her
5 shingle for almost 39 years; and

6 WHEREAS, When she began the practice of law and for some years
7 thereafter, Ms. Farris confronted a continuing assault on her
8 dignity from official segregation, as well as the attitudes that
9 spawned it; in the face of rank injustice, she persevered and
10 established a reputation for honesty and fairness; and

11 WHEREAS, Over the course of five decades, this notable
12 Texan's extraordinary accomplishments have earned her deep esteem,
13 and she has been recognized by the American Bar Association,
14 National Bar Association, and State Bar of Texas; and

15 WHEREAS, Members of the Wichita County Bar Association are
16 celebrating her achievements with a dinner and tribute on November
17 13, 2003, and together with the Wichita Falls Area Community
18 Foundation, they are establishing an endowed scholarship in her
19 name; and

20 WHEREAS, Throughout her career, Charlye Farris has done honor
21 to her profession and contributed immeasurably to the benefit of
22 her community; now, therefore, be it

23 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 78th Texas
24 Legislature, 3rd Called Session, hereby recognize Charlye Ola
25 Farris for her exceptional record of triumph and service and extend
26 to her sincere best wishes for continued success; and, be it further

27 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be

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1 prepared for Ms. Farris as an expression of high regard by the Texas
2 House of Representatives.