

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 120

**WHEREAS**, The Senate of the State of Texas is pleased to recognize Charlye Ola Farris, who in 1953 became the first African-American woman licensed to practice law in Texas; and

**WHEREAS**, In celebration of Charlye O. Farris's many personal and professional achievements, the Wichita County Bar Association is paying tribute to her on November 13, 2003, at a dinner in her honor at The Woman's Forum; Arthur Bea Williams, her first secretary, is serving as master of ceremonies and several of Charlye's friends and colleagues are speaking at the event; and

**WHEREAS**, Charlye Farris was born and raised in Wichita Falls; her father was the first African-American school superintendent in Texas, and her mother was an elementary schoolteacher for 49 years; in 1945, when Charlye was 15 years old, she graduated from Booker T. Washington High School; at the age of 18, she earned a bachelor's degree from Prairie View A&M College; and

**WHEREAS**, Charlye taught third and fourth graders for one year before deciding to pursue her interest in becoming an attorney; at the time that Charlye applied and was admitted to law school, few women and even fewer African-American women were members of the legal profession in our nation; undeterred by these circumstances, Charlye entered law school at the University of Denver and transferred the following year to Howard University in Washington, D.C.; she earned her law degree in 1953 and returned to Texas, where she passed the bar exam and received her license to practice law; and

**WHEREAS**, Charlye Farris opened her law office in February of 1955 on the east side of Wichita Falls, thus becoming the first woman to actively practice law in Wichita County; after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, she moved her law practice downtown near the county courthouse where her office has remained for nearly 39 years; and

**WHEREAS**, Prior to the passage of civil rights legislation in the nation, Charlye endured the many indignities of segregation while practicing law at the county courthouse; she nevertheless persevered, worked hard, and established a reputation for honesty and fairness; and

**WHEREAS**, In recognition of her exceptional accomplishments over the past 50 years, Charlye Farris has been honored by the American Bar Association, the National Bar Association, and the State Bar of Texas; a scholarship named in her honor is in the process of being established by the Wichita County Bar Association and the Wichita Falls Area Community Foundation; the scholarship will support individuals pursuing law and law-related professions with preference given to traditionally underrepresented groups; and

**WHEREAS**, Charlye O. Farris epitomizes all that is honorable and desirable in the legal profession, and all Texans should be proud of her many contributions to the practice of law in our state; now, therefore, be it

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**RESOLVED**, That the Senate of the State of Texas, 78th Legislature, 3rd Called Session, hereby commend Charlye Ola Farris for her courageous and diligent pursuit of a legal career and for her exemplary accomplishments as an attorney and extend best wishes to her on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of her earning a licence to practice law in Texas; and, be it further

**RESOLVED**, That a copy of this Resolution be prepared for her as an expression of esteem from the Texas Senate.

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President of the Senate

I hereby certify that the above Resolution was adopted by the Senate on October 10, 2003.

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Secretary of the Senate

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Member, Texas Senate