

By: Jones of Dallas

H.R. No. 120

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, Osceola Mays of Dallas passed away on April 20,  
2 2004, at the age of 94, and the loss of this esteemed poet and singer  
3 has left a void in the lives of those who knew and loved her; and

4 WHEREAS, Born Nell Douglas on December 13, 1909, in Waskom,  
5 Mrs. Mays chose the name Osceola as a young girl after being visited  
6 at home by an American Indian; it was during her adolescence that  
7 Osceola was introduced to the history of her family by her mother  
8 and grandmother, who together immersed her in the oral tradition of  
9 poetry and song; and

10 WHEREAS, After the death of her mother, Mrs. Mays began  
11 writing poems of her own as part of the grieving process, and she  
12 continued to preserve the stories of her family, sharing the tales  
13 of triumph and tragedy with all who cared to listen; and

14 WHEREAS, Mrs. Mays married Clarence Mays in 1936 and, after  
15 moving to Dallas nine years later, began a 30-year career as a nanny  
16 and domestic worker; she joined Good Street Baptist Church in 1951,  
17 and 30 years later she presented a program featuring her poetry and  
18 unique spiritual singing style to her fellow congregants as part of  
19 Black History Month; and

20 WHEREAS, The success of this presentation led to a similar  
21 performance at the Dallas Folk Festival in October 1983; in 1989,  
22 with her 80th birthday nearing, she performed in the stage show  
23 *Texas in Paris* in the famed City of Lights, earning rave reviews;  
24 the show was later revived in Florence, Italy; and

1           WHEREAS, Osceola Mays was a woman of rare grace and  
2 compassion whose life served as a link between the past and the  
3 present, and although she will be missed by family and friends  
4 alike, her spirit remains with them through her legacy of poetry and  
5 song; now, therefore, be it

6           RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 78th Texas  
7 Legislature, 4th Called Session, hereby pay tribute to the life of  
8 Osceola Mays and extend deepest sympathy to her family: to her  
9 sisters, Georgia Perkins, Hattie M. White, and Mamie Douglas; to  
10 the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of her late husband; and  
11 to the other relatives and friends of this remarkable woman; and, be  
12 it further

13           RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be  
14 prepared for the members of her family and that when the Texas House  
15 of Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Osceola  
16 Mays.