

By: Craddick

H.R. No. 143

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, The community of Midland lost a most distinguished
2 citizen with the passing of Dr. Viola M. Coleman on October 12,
3 2005, at the age of 86; and

4 WHEREAS, Born in New Iberia, Louisiana, on September 25,
5 1919, Dr. Coleman received a bachelor's degree in education from
6 Southern University in 1939; she subsequently spent several years
7 teaching before deciding to pursue a longtime interest in medicine;
8 because African Americans were barred at that time from attending
9 medical school in Louisiana, she moved to Nashville, Tennessee, to
10 attend Meharry Medical College, from which she graduated in 1939;
11 and

12 WHEREAS, After completing her internship in New York, Dr.
13 Coleman returned to Louisiana, but she was unable to practice in her
14 hometown; she and her husband, Raymond Coleman, consequently headed
15 for California; on their way west, however, they stopped in Midland
16 on the advice of a friend, who knew that that city was seeking to
17 recruit a minority physician; and

18 WHEREAS, Promised hospital privileges at the new Midland
19 hospital and assured of a bank loan, Dr. Coleman established her
20 practice in that West Texas community in 1951; with quiet
21 determination, she then set about addressing not only the medical
22 needs of her patients but also the civil rights inequities that
23 confronted the city's African American population; and

24 WHEREAS, Having opened her waiting room to all races, Dr.

1 Coleman became instrumental in ending segregation in the Midland
2 hospital and in integrating local restaurants; she also played a
3 crucial role in integrating the Midland public schools, and she
4 continued to be deeply involved in efforts to support minority
5 students and to secure for them equal academic opportunities; her
6 efforts in that regard ranged from many acts of individual
7 assistance, such as paying for students' education and helping in
8 other ways at critical moments, to securing a Head Start program,
9 advocating for students with limited English proficiency, and
10 working to improve high school graduation rates; and

11 WHEREAS, Greatly respected by her peers, Dr. Coleman became
12 the medical chief of staff at Midland Memorial Hospital (MMH), and
13 in that capacity she sought to promote greater public understanding
14 of hospital issues; she was also responsible for initiating an EMT
15 program at Midland College, making it possible for emergency calls
16 to be answered by trained personnel; and

17 WHEREAS, Dr. Coleman maintained her private practice until
18 MMH purchased it in 1998 and turned her office into a community
19 clinic, whereupon she joined the clinic's staff; at the age of 85,
20 she was still seeing patients; and

21 WHEREAS, A woman of strong religious faith, Viola Coleman was
22 a valued member of First United Methodist Church; and

23 WHEREAS, Among the myriad accolades bestowed on this esteemed
24 physician and civic leader was the prestigious Thomas Jefferson
25 Award for Public Service; Viola M. Coleman High School in Midland is
26 named in her honor; and

27 WHEREAS, For more than half a century, Dr. Coleman gave

1 unstintingly of her time, talents, and energy to provide health
2 care for the most vulnerable and to champion the cause of social
3 justice, and the legacy of her life is truly beyond measure; now,
4 therefore, be it

5 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 79th Texas
6 Legislature, 3rd Called Session, hereby pay tribute to the life of
7 Dr. Viola M. Coleman and extend sincere sympathy to the members of
8 her family: to her sons and daughters-in-law, Conrad and Marie
9 Coleman and Reginald and Debra Coleman; to her grandchildren,
10 Christopher, Kathleen, Michelle, and David Coleman; to her brother,
11 Jefferson Johnson; and to all who mourn this esteemed woman; and, be
12 it further

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