

By: Ritter

H.R. No. 45

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, The State of Texas lost an exceptional jurist and
2 civic leader with the passing of the Honorable James M. Farris of
3 Beaumont on November 5, 2004, at the age of 72; and

4 WHEREAS, This native Texan was born and raised in
5 Hull-Daisetta, in Liberty County, and attended Baylor University,
6 where he earned both a bachelor's degree and a law degree; after
7 graduating from college and before entering Baylor Law School, he
8 served in the U.S. Army and spent 17 months in Korea; and

9 WHEREAS, Judge Farris began his career in the office of the
10 state attorney general in Austin and then joined the staff of the
11 Jefferson County district attorney's office; in 1969 he received
12 appointment to the bench of County Court at Law No. 2, and in 1977
13 Governor Dolph Briscoe appointed him judge of the 317th District
14 Court, with jurisdiction over juvenile and family law cases; before
15 retiring in 1996, Judge Farris won reelection to that post seven
16 times, never once facing an opponent; and

17 WHEREAS, Deeply affected by the plight of many children who
18 came through his court, Judge Farris became a nationally renowned
19 children's advocate; he played an instrumental role in establishing
20 the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Southeast Texas and
21 the local Child Advocates, Inc.; an honorary board member of the
22 local CASA at the time of his passing, he had also served as a board
23 member and president of Texas CASA; and

24 WHEREAS, Judge Farris served as an officer and director of

1 the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges for a
2 number of years and held the post of president in 1993-1994; in
3 addition, his intensive work on children's issues led to his
4 service on a number of statewide boards and councils; he was
5 appointed in 1989 to the Commission on Children, Youth, and Family
6 Services by the Texas Health & Human Services Coordinating Board,
7 in 1994 to the Children's Justice Task Force by the Texas Department
8 of Protective and Regulatory Services, and in 1997 to the "Texans
9 Care for Children" Board of Directors; and

10 WHEREAS, A gifted storyteller and public speaker, in the last
11 decade of his life he traveled to some 45 states to deliver
12 presentations on juvenile justice and other concerns; his
13 talks--which he painstakingly prepared, peppered generously with
14 humor, and invariably delivered in a friendly and down-to-earth
15 manner--routinely received standing ovations; and

16 WHEREAS, Among the numerous accolades bestowed on Judge
17 Farris were a 1991 Commissioner's Award for the Prevention of Child
18 Abuse and Neglect, conferred by the U.S. Department of Health and
19 Human Services; moreover, he was named Judge of the Year by Texas
20 CASA in 1992 and Citizen of the Year by the Neches River Festival in
21 1995, designated as Baylor Lawyer of the Year in 1997, and elected
22 as president of the Baylor Law Alumni Association in 1999; and

23 WHEREAS, With his wife, Ellarene, Judge Farris was the proud
24 parent of three children, as well as a doting grandparent; and

25 WHEREAS, Over the course of a long and distinguished career
26 and an active retirement, Judge Farris devoted his considerable
27 energy and talents to securing a safe environment for children who

1 were at risk of abuse and neglect, and he left a legacy of
2 immeasurable value in the institutions he nurtured and the lives he
3 touched; now, therefore, be it

4 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 79th Texas
5 Legislature hereby pay special tribute to the life of Judge James M.
6 Farris and extend deepest sympathy to the members of his family: to
7 his wife, Ellarene Farris; to his children and grandchildren; and
8 to all who mourn the passing of this fine man; and, be it further

9 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
10 prepared for his family and that when the Texas House of
11 Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Judge James
12 M. Farris.